Belong Anywhere, Commodify Everywhere

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Abstract
Under the banner of the ‘sharing economy’, private short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb have witnessed tremendous success, facilitating millions of overnight stays in everyday homes. And while the issue has garnered considerable attention from both popular media and policy makers in cities such as New York, Amsterdam, London and Berlin, little attention has been paid to the topic in Stockholm, Sweden as well as academic literature. With this absence of discussion serving as a point of departure, I analyze both primary and secondary data pertaining to the rise of Airbnb in Stockholm. With a theoretical lens based in critical poststructuralist thought, I argue that Airbnb is embedded within neoliberal urbanism, fueling the social and economic forces behind gentrification. In order to address the problematic implications of Airbnb and similar platforms, I suggest policymakers and applicable actors to review the current taxing scheme, consider temporal restrictions, align short-term rental laws with subletting laws and communicate clearly.
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1. Introduction

I would like to begin by sharing two brief personal anecdotes. The first finds a couple living in a large North American city, both faced by financially demanding rents in their respective one-bedroom apartments. These two friends of mine resolve that in order to better afford their rents, and to free up some time to focus on their personal projects, they would each rent out their apartments for one week per month through the popular website Airbnb, while they stay at their partner’s apartment. This week of renting, they argue, brings in enough extra cash to make living in the city much more affordable. The second anecdote took place late 2012, as I volunteered to help an acquaintance move out of her second floor apartment along an increasingly trendy street, right above an art gallery. Her landlord had reportedly terminated her admittedly informal lease, citing renovation requirements. Three months later, the same unit appeared on Airbnb listed at a nightly rate well beyond anything my acquaintance had been paying, let alone could afford. Carrying the slogan “belong anywhere”, Airbnb had indirectly facilitated displacement of the working poor.

I would later find that these two experiences have reappeared in various forms in public relations battles played out through the media, in support, or against, the private short-term rental site Airbnb. High profile battles have garnered attention in cities such as London, Berlin, New York, San Francisco and Montreal, often flaring up where tourism is dominant and affordable housing increasingly absent. Though in Stockholm, the case study featured in this thesis, there seems to be little discussion surrounding the rise, and future of Airbnb in the city. In fact, early on in my research process I reached out to a public servant at Stockholm City Hall inquiring as to whether or not the rise of private short-term rental platforms was on the radar of City Staff. “Sure, all the time” he replied, “when planning vacations to NYC”. This absence of policy addressing the one thousand plus current Airbnb listings in Stockholm is accompanied by a gap in academic literature around the spatial implications of the platform. With this in mind, and an interest in underlying theoretical readings of Airbnb, I set out to explore what an appropriate response would be with Stockholm as a case while encountering theoretical discussions surrounding critical
urban theory and policy along the way. In doing so, I have proposed four research questions, each respectively guiding my empirical and analytical research outcomes. Directing my empirical work, I ask: *How has the rise of private short-term rentals spatially materialised in Stockholm?* And *how have other cities responded to the issue?* Then tapping into a more theoretical and analytical discussion, I ask: *How can the rise of private short-term rental platforms be understood through a critical urban theory lens, and what are the trends, and how can policy makers best address them?*

In order to address these questions, I begin presenting my research design and associate methodological tactics employed in gathering both primary and secondary data and providing insight into the formulation of my theoretical basis and . My theoretical lens is then outlined, influenced by critical urban theory and policy. At this point I take the time to explain the theory surrounding the idea of the ‘sharing economy’. The case study is then presented, introducing the reader to Airbnb in Stockholm. This is done in two parts. First by familiarising the reader to Airbnb, a platform that I acknowledge many may be unfamiliar with, before presenting the common discourse surrounding it. Secondly, I present a brief political history of housing in the nation’s capital, it’s resulting unique forms of housing tenure, and contemporary housing situation. These two sections are then tied together, providing a reading of the state of Airbnb in Stockholm based on scant existing editorial and political discussions. At this point, my research results are presented, adding to the otherwise meager local and academic discussion on the topic. Within this section I answer the two empirically grounded research questions posed above. Then, in order to further contextualise and understand these findings, I discuss these findings as related to the aforementioned theoretical framework and current housing regime in Stockholm.
2. Methodology

Being qualitative in nature, this piece of research draws upon multiple methodological tactics to gain a holistic understanding of private short-term rentals in Stockholm. With my four leading research questions guiding both empirical and analytical research, I turn to a relatively wide array of methods to gather primary and secondary, qualitative and quantitative data and shape my theoretical lens. For a break down of the data gathered throughout the research process, see figure i. The following section aims to provide the reader with a thorough understanding into the abductive nature of the research design strategy guiding my thesis. To do so, I have divided my methodology into two parts, the first addressing the tactics employed in order to answer my empirical questions, while the latter addresses those used to address the analytical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Data scraped from Airbnb.com</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Census data, regional geographic polygons</td>
<td>Editorials, private and public sector reports, laws, press releases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure i. Data types gathered throughout the research process.*

2.1 Empirical methodologies

Again, my empirical research questions are: *How has the rise of private short-term rentals spatially materialised in Stockholm?* and *how have other cities responded to the issue?* In tackling my research questions, a number of processes were undertaken in order to ‘set the stage’, gather the data, and present the results, each of which deserve explaining to ensure a transparent process. The first endeavour deserving detailed explanation into the research strategies employed is the introduction to Airbnb as presented in the case study section,
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namely, the review of proponents and critics. Essentially a media analysis, this section presents a balanced presentation of the facts and ideas surrounding the contentious debate around Airbnb. The discussion in popular media in certain cities outside of Stockholm around the subject is remarkably large, far outweighing the limited discussion among academics. To get an understanding of the discussion taking place in cities across North America and Europe, secondary data was gathered almost exclusively online. In order to gather the sampled articles, I turned to simple Google searches, followed press release statements and trending discussions, researched public, private and NGO reports, following discussion down every road possible. This wealth of secondary data was then processed and analysed, pulling out the dominant discussion in favour and opposed to the rise of private short-term rentals. In presenting the arguments, I made an effort to avoid the sensationalised stories of damaged apartments, prostitution rings and ‘drug inducedorgies’. Further research into this discussion could involve a more in depth discourse analysis and/or a controversy map as developed by the architect Albena Yaneva.

Gathering the policies, and underlying motives of New York City, London, Berlin and Amsterdam, was done in a similar fashion. These cities were selected based on the presence of private short-term rental policies. Though in this case, more attention was directed towards the government published policies first and foremost, with newspaper articles and associated press releases addressing the surrounding actors and motives involved. Of course a more in depth look at any one of these cities could warrant a full study on its own. These reviews were chosen as part of my research design to provide me with a broad understanding of current debates and policies addressing the rise of private short-term rentals.

To gain an understanding of the distribution, types and prices of private short-term listings, I required a geocoded dataset to work with. Given the platform’s popularity, I opted to rely strictly on Airbnb listings in Stockholm, foregoing other vacation rental platforms such as Vacation Rental By Owner, Flipkey and Homeaway. Rental listing data was gathered from the Airbnb website using a process known as data scraping, in which a software program (in this case OutWit Hub) extracts relevant data from a website. This
valuable step could not have been completed without the generous help from my colleague of Paul Gallep. In the case of scraping data of all Stockholm listings on Airbnb, we were able to obtain the listing titles, user ID, room type, neighbourhood, latitude and longitude. Airbnb no longer provides a total number of listings value for any city exceeding a thousand listings, making the study population in this case unknown. Nevertheless, we were able to obtain data for 1008 listings within Stockholm. 14 listings outside of Stockholm proper, and 11 incomplete listings were then removed from this data set, leaving me with 983 relevant listings. Furthermore, taking only the first 1008 listings, data scraping software omitted any listings from the outer-city district of Hässelby-Vällingby. This absence was a result of a restriction imposed by the Airbnb website, and reinforced by the data scraping software. While I continue to conduct my analysis with this missing data, a quick, informal search on Airbnb reveals this lapse in data to amount to about 40 listings. An example of the data collected through this process can be viewed in figure ii. It is important to note that each data point in this set represents only a listing, failing to reflect the popularity of the listing. Adding additional columns to the original data set of 983 listings, I categorised neighbourhoods into consistent district titles, and calculated listings per district, listings per 1000 residents per district and median price per district. A more in depth inquiry into the topic could employ deeper data scraping to gather the number of reviews associated with each listing ID to gauge popularity.

With my data set prepared, I then turned to conducting spatial visualisations. With limited time, budget and know-how, I used the online platform Cartodb.com. Functioning as a simplified, free and user-friendly version of more complicated GIS software, Cartodb allows the user to project geo-tagged data tables onto OpenStreetMap basemaps. Three maps were then visualised to present individual Airbnb listing types, Airbnb listing density, and median listing price per district. For the later two maps, district polygon data was obtained through an open source website. Additionally, the seven categories for the later two maps were calculated as equal interval. The above-mentioned tactics serve double duty. First, they serve as tools to answer my previously stated empirical research questions, and secondly, they help ‘set the scene’ for more analytical work.
2.2 Analytical Methodologies

To compliment the empirical research and data gathered through the above-mentioned methods, I turn to data requiring more analytical research. This analytical work primarily revolves around primary data gathered through research interviews. Carried out through March and April of 2015, these semi-structured interviews explored how both Airbnb hosts and relevant industry actors understood their relationship to private short-term rentals. Trying to understand the landscape of private short-term rentals in Stockholm, I opted towards interviewing hosts, given their familiarity with the city and the service. I resorted to semi-structured interviews over surveys for their ability to delve deeper into notable or unclear responses. Guests were of limited interest in this particular study due to recruitment logistics and their assumed lack of understanding on the city (of course this is not to say that their views and opinions are not of interest. Interviewing Airbnb guests could provide plenty of material of interest to geographers, planners and travel researchers alike).

Interview participants were recruited through a range of methods including personal contacts (one respondent), networking events (one), reaching out through

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listing Title</th>
<th>Price Night</th>
<th>Room Type</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stylish apartment at Södermalm 42m2</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room in central modern flat</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>Private room</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW apartment in center, Sveavägen</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Norrmalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosy Study in Stockholm Sjöstaden</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn of the century - Vasatan</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Norrmalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacious and child-friendly apt</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Hägersten-Liljeholmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top location.Private bathroom.Quiet</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>Private room</td>
<td>Östermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charming room in central Stockholm</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>Private room</td>
<td>Östermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Östermalm: elegant+spacious 2 baths</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Östermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cozy apartment in central Södermalm</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living room at Mosebacke Torg</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>Shared room</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive apartment in SoFo (97sqm)</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charming apartment in Södermalm</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Södermalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large &amp; trendy 10 min from City</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Hägersten-Liljeholmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central city studio in Stockholm</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>Entire home/apt</td>
<td>Kungsholmen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure ii: A sample of the data scraped from the Airbnb Stockholm website.*
‘sharing economy’ networks (one), snowballing (one), and through ‘cold calls’ via the Airbnb messaging platform (four). The later method, cold calling, witnessed a response rate of 21%. Throughout every method, I prepared an identical interview request letter as found in the appendix. The request letter assured their names and exact locations would remain anonymous, and that they could pull out of the study at any point. This clause was especially important as some of the questions and answers touched upon breach of tenancy contracts and potential tax violations. Once a time and place was agreed upon, the interviewee and I discussed the questions as laid out in the guiding questions sheet (see appendix), occasionally straying from the guide as noteworthy discussions came up. Though methods for recruiting slightly differed, interviews with the relevant industry actors follows a similar, semi-structured format. Early on in the research process a list of actors positioned in situations relevant to my research was compiled (See Appendix). As further described in the results section of this paper, I managed to interview just two of the original candidates due to a lack of awareness, response or time. Given these two actors positions in professional fields worth of mentioning, similar anonymity guarantees were not offered. Upon completing this qualitative data collection, interview discussions were then transcribed and codified in order to pull out dominant themes and topics. During the writing process, interview participants were assigned pseudonyms according to their neighbourhood (i.e. Östermalm, Södermalm, Midsommarkransen).

Necessary to my research design, I establish a theoretical lens shaped through a literature review process. Based on my past research interests and experiences, I brought with me a critical and poststructuralist system of inquiry. In consulting a broad body of literature, I sought to expand my understanding of how this system of inquiry addresses topics of travel, gentrification and urban policy. What I found was a well-developed body of literature aligning with my anticipated results while still unapplied to my case, therefore representing the opportunity to contribute to an academic discussion. Over the course of my entire research process, I continually looked for new sources, relying on online academic journals, academic and public libraries, my supervisor’s professional collection, and colleague’s suggestions. Each new reading often led to many more, and by keeping an annotated bibliography of relevant articles and book, I was able to chart topics and ideas.
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from author to author, discipline to discipline, topic to topic. The resulting collection and digesting of the theoretical literature is presented in the following section.
3. Theory

In order to understand the rise of private short-term rental listings in Stockholm, I turn to a relatively broad set of theoretical lenses. While some assist in understanding the technological and organisational behaviour of the so called ‘sharing economy’, others turn to more critical urban theory and policy discussion, grounded in poststructuralist thought. For the later, I turn to three guiding lenses useful in addressing the gap in literature, understanding primary and secondary data gathered, and forming progressive policy recommendations.

3.1 Sharing Economy

At the risk of sounding trite, I would like to introduce the sharing economy by way of an Oxford definition. The Oxford Online Dictionary define the ‘sharing economy’ as “an economic system in which assets or services are shared between private individuals, either for free or for a fee, typically by means of the Internet” (Steinmetz, 2015). However, it’s not the actual definition that is of interest (as the phenomenon can be much more dynamic than this simple definition, as discussed below), but rather it’s timing. Although sharing certainly predates market economies, this definition was added to The Oxford Online Dictionary as of February 2015, reflecting the rapid rise, and apparent entrenchment of the sharing economy also referred to as collaborative consumption. As the above definition hints, the internet, more specifically Web 2.0, where users not only read, but generate content, has been instrumental in the explosive growth of the sharing economy. With earlier online platforms like Craigslist, Amazon and Ebay, consumers and producers alike were given a taste of exchanging goods and services beyond the brick and mortar store. But these models still followed a fairly traditional market exchange formula (Zervas et al., 2015). Botsman and Rogers (2011), argue that these new online market platforms fail to address raising consumer exhaustion associated with social and environmental impacts of a market built on disposability and planned obsolescence. The ‘sharing economy’ responds to consumer exhaustion by accommodating peer-to-peer exchanges and encouraging longer product lifecycles. And though the collaborative consumption platforms address everything from dog sitting to tool libraries, three industries - transportation (Uber and
Lyft), casual labour (TaskRabbit) and hospitality (Airbnb) - dominate the overall model in both popular awareness and economic success. For Airbnb, the strong connection to Botsman and Rogers’ defining characteristics of collaborative consumption, coupled with major economic success has allowed the platform to become the poster child and controversial lightning rod of the sharing economy.

The sharing economy, proponents argue, offers the opportunity to lessen the social, environmental and economic impacts of over consumption. According to Botsman and Rogers (ibid.), it offers “the benefits of ownership with reduced personal burden and cost and lower environmental impact” (p. 38). When it comes to facilitating exchanges, Botsman and Rogers (ibid.) identify three structural models: redistribution markets, product service systems, and collaborative lifestyles. Redistributive markets take advantage of, and exchange, products that are no longer of use to the owner. Goods can be exchanged among participants through free exchanges, points, or simply for cash. Encouraged by the opportunity to save money and reduce consumption, transactions can take place between strangers on an anonymous market, or acquaintances through a community organised marketplace. With product service systems, participants benefit from the usage of tangible goods by temporarily renting, rather than the outright ownership. Products in this system can be owned by individuals or businesses, and shared through either peer-to-peer networks or amongst a pool of subscribed members, respectively. The amount of profit withdrawn from exchanges of this model range from case to case. On the other hand, Collaborative lifestyles share, swap, sell and barter less tangible goods such as space, time and skill among members. Exchanges in everything from parking spaces to personal labour can be observed in this model. According to Botsman and Rogers (ibid.), participants are motivated by the potential to save and earn money, time and space in ways that would have been more difficult to organise without the wide networking potential of the internet. By connecting those with underused space to vacationers, private short-term rental systems such as Airbnb fall under this category. Taking a somewhat different approach, but still allowing for the three aforementioned structural models, Schor (2014) finds value in defining sharing economy platforms by their market orientation (for-profit vs. non-profit) and market structure (peer-to-peer or business-to-peer).
The success of each of these three ‘sharing economy’ systems, Botsman and Rogers (2011) continue, are reliant upon four principles: critical mass, a belief in the commons, idling capacity, and trust between strangers. Critical mass, they contend, is vital to successful sharing economy systems. With more members on board, despite which system the model operates in, the larger the potential to connect with lenders, hosts, merchants, borrowers, guests and customers. Citing Elinor Ostrom’s work on governing the commons, they argue collaborative consumption systems carry an underlying philosophical belief in the commons holding the critical mass of participants together. In this case, the commons takes shape as the internet and various open platforms (OpenStreetMap, Wikipedia, OpenOffice) rather than pastoral grazing land that traditionally illustrate the concept. Whether or not participants explicitly align with this idea, the success of collaborative consumption models depends upon it. As Botsman and Rogers propose, “every single person who joins or uses Collaborative Consumption creates value for another person, even if this was not the intention” (p. 91). The idling capacity of products and spaces represent both the problematic aspect of traditional consumption patterns as well as the potential of collaborative consumption models. With countless tools, bikes, cars, books and videogames (to name a few) sitting unused for most of the time, these models help maximize utility. For private short-term rentals, idling capacity can take the form of an extra room with the host present as well or an entire unit while the host is out of town. A unit owned for the sole purpose of renting out on the private short-term rental market would not qualify as an example of collaborative consumption. And finally, trust between strangers is critical in attracting and retaining members to the networks sustaining collaborative consumption models. Trust is especially important in peer-to-peer exchange networks, where the traditional middleman (i.e. salesclerk, broker or travel agent) has been removed. In many online platforms, trust materialises in the form of a user-based rating system as well as other security measures such as ID checks.

Michel Bauwens of the Peer-to-Peer Foundation proposes an alternative method to understand how such a wide range of platforms, with equally wide underlying ideologies and structures can all classify under the ‘sharing economy’ umbrella (OuiShareTV, 2013). This reading offers some insight into understanding how Car2Go, a car rental platform owned by a large German automotive manufacturer, can be listed along a local not for
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profit clothing library as part of the same movement. For Bauwens, peer-to-peer platforms exist along two axes, one oriented towards control (centralised global vs. distributed local) and the other towards orientation (for-profit vs. for-benefit) (See Figure iii). According to this categorisation, sharing economy platforms can range from promoting centralised control of peer-to-peer dynamics with a for-profit orientation (i.e. Airbnb, Facebook and Car2Go) to more localised, community control of peer-to-peer dynamics with a for-benefit orientation (i.e. ethical supply chains, yard sharing and transition towns). Bauwens’ ideal future scenario lies in a global, centralised reorientation of society around for-benefit oriented sharing platforms.
The rapid growth and subsequent impact of ‘sharing economy’ platforms such as Uber and Airbnb has carried with it hints to the so-called ‘disruptiveness’ of the businesses’ model. Disruptive innovation theory examines how businesses fail by disregarding new competitive rivals initially viewed as inferior to their product or service. While underperforming in some categories, early disruptive products offer cheaper, simpler and/or more convenient qualities. These characteristics attract a lower-end segment of an
existing market or creates an entirely new market. These new markets are often smaller and of limited profit margins and subsequently ignored by established companies. However, over time, these disruptive products improve, growing their market size by cutting into ‘mainstream’ markets. Previously established companies may eventually attempt to compete in these new markets, though often struggling to compete against the now entrenched disruptive companies and their offerings (Christensen & Bower, 1995). Christensen and Ranor (2003) point to online travel agencies such as Expedia, Travelocity and Orbitz as previous disruptive innovations in the tourism industry. While the term ‘disruptive innovation’ tends to be used quite liberally in some circles (Lepore, 2014), particularly in the technological start up industry, Guttentag (2013) finds the term to be a fitting description of Airbnb. Citing Christensen’s theories of disruptive innovations, Guttentag finds that Airbnb does live up to the label of a disruptive innovation. And by highlighting Airbnb’s lower prices, perceived authenticity, questionable legalities, and trust issues, Guttentag (2013) makes the case for Airbnb as the next generation of disruptive innovation in the tourism industry, targeting hospitality sector rather than travel agencies. Ongoing improvements in Airbnb’s taxation schemes and host insurance has allowed the platform to expand its market to appeal to travellers looking for a more formal hotel services.

3.2 The Neoliberal City
Like so many phenomena, the ‘sharing economy’ is embedded within a global neoliberal landscape in one way or another. It could be argued that the sharing economy critiques foundations of neoliberalism through rejecting traditional market platforms and consumption patterns. On the other hand, one could just as easily argue that by calling for deregulated laws around transportation, labour, land use and hospitality, it is an archetype of neoliberalism. Put simply, neoliberalism embraces competitive open markets, free of state and labour interventions, allowing individuals, organizations and governments to pursue optimal socioeconomic development. Beginning in the 1970s as a political reaction to the shortcomings of the then hegemonic rule of Keynesian economics, neoliberalism is
often associated with the policies of political leaders including Ronald Reagan (US), Margaret Thatcher (UK) and to a lesser extent, Carl Bildt (Sweden). An incredibly large body of literature continues to critically examine the impact of neoliberalism over the past four decades, including, but not limited to the impact such policies have had on urban landscapes. As Purcell (2009) argues, the policies of market driven governance models have “had a corrosive impact on cities and urban life” (p. 141). He is not alone, as others (Harvey, Smith, Theodore, Peck and Brenner) point to top-down policies benefiting capital over citizens, detrimental to the social landscapes of cities. However, neoliberalism cannot simply be described as a set of policies applied from upper levels of government downwards. As Wendy Larner (2000) describes, Neoliberalism extends beyond policy into ideology while also existing as a form of governmentality. The later post-structuralist reading of neoliberalism, as a form of governmentality, sees both institutions and individuals conforming to the norms of market. Larner makes the astute point that although neoliberalism calls for less Government, there is no less governance.

Particularly relevant to urban planning and policy, is the spatial effects of neoliberalisation. One of the more striking, spatial characteristics is its unevenness and adaptability. This unevenness can be observed across many scales: from the spatial division of labour between the global north and south, to the concentration of capital in ‘alpha’ cities, to the juxtaposition of social-spatial polarization in cities from Rio De Janeiro to New York and even Stockholm. As Theodore, Peck and Brenner argue (2013), neoliberalism tends to be quite adaptable in the face of institutional obstacles and contradictions, taking a different form from case to case. The resulting landscape created when the normative and unachievable idea of unfettered market is confronted with pre existing and conflicting policies, institutions or culture is what they have coined ‘actually existing neoliberalism’. Far from the “heartland” of neoliberalism, Sweden is no exception to the adaptability of market rule. David Harvey (2005) writes that “Sweden is an example of what might be called ‘circumscribed neoliberalization’, and its generally superior social condition reflects that fact” (p. 115). This readings tends to be a little naive, as many of the former pillars of the welfare state, not the least being housing, have been privatised or mandated to act according to market ideology. Though at the same time, the path dependency of the welfare
housing model described by Bengtson (2013) has retained collectivist ideologies within the Swedish mutation of neoliberalism. Despite the multi-scalar characteristic of neoliberalism, cities maintain a crucial role on many fronts. For one, they seem to serve as laboratories for neoliberal policies, with municipal governments competitively chasing corporate headquarters, ‘creative’ workers and ‘world-class’ architecture (Theodore et al. 2013.). “Cities” they argue “have become increasingly central to the reproduction, transmutation, and continual reconstitution of neoliberalism during the last three decades” (p. 24). In the process, urban life has become “a commodity, as has the city itself, in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major aspects of the urban political economy” (Harvey, 2008 p. 31). This commodification serves one of the most fundamental roles of cities, to absorb capital surpluses (ibid.). Referring to the city and city life, as a commodity to be produced and consumed, is central to understanding gentrification, a concept tightly related to neoliberal ideology, policy and governmentality.

### 3.3 Comodification and Consumption of the City

Key to the understanding of critical theory surrounding neoliberalism is Marx’s concept of commodification, in which goods or services undergo a transformation to commodities valued for their exchange values. As Polanyi (1968) writes, the fictitious commodification of land (along with labor) is an integral pillar of market economies. And as market economies began to emerge towards the end of the 18th century, enclosurement took hold through much of the United Kingdom, converting public commons to privately held land in order to fuel the emerging industries in the cities. A seminal theorist on the social production and consumption of space, Henri Lefebvre narrates this transformation as such: “Space itself has begun to be bought and sold. Not the earth, the soil, but social space, produced as such, with this purpose, this finality” (2003, p. 154). Accompanying this commodification and privatization of the commons, was a changing perception of the home. In Rybczynki’s *Home, a Short History of an Idea* (1986), he points to a pivotal moment in history when the emergence of rented accommodations facilitated the
separation of work and private life. For a growing number of the bourgeois during this period, the home “was becoming a more private place.” (p. 39, emphasis in original), abandoning its prior role as a live/work space. Fast forward a couple centuries and the commodification of space, as both a concept and a process, has show no signs of slowing.

Sharon Zukin theorizes the cultural and social underpinnings of contemporary patterns of the marketisation of public space. Influenced by anthropological and economic readings of liminality, in which social norms are suspended as an individual, or market good, passes from one phase into another, Zukin (1991) attempts to ground the concept in spatial theory. For her, liminal spaces constitute an ‘inbetweeness’, caught in transition between institutions: culture and economy, public and private, market and place. Liminal spaces are observed through places previously tightly defined by social norms giving way to market culture. As she writes, “As the social meaning of such spaces is renegotiated by structural change and individual action, liminal space becomes a metaphor for the extensive reordering by which markets, in our time, encroach upon place” (p.269).

Contemporary examples of the commodification and privatisation of public space are in great supply. Everything from bus shelter advertisements, to privately owned public plazas, to entire charter towns illustrate the seemingly limitless commercialisation of urban life. Concerned with the management of land use, planning as a profession and as a process hasn't been immune to this evolving commodification of space. This shift has been well documented, with the rise of private sector planning contractors, public-private partnerships, and development oriented education programs serving as a few examples. These examples, among others, illustrate the commodification of previously routine governmental functions into a marketable and exchange based good (Dear, 2000). Tied closely to ‘consumer culture’ - in which goods and services are no longer valued strictly for their ‘natural’ use value, but for their role as communicators of cultural and economic capital- contemporary spatial commodification is reflected in both processes and product. For Baudrillard, the commodity becomes a sign, valued and consumed primarily as such. This reading of consumption in a postmodern era provides a useful lens into how we consume spaces from housing types (lofts versus million program) and neighbourhoods (bohemian, quiet, hip, or funkis) to cities (Brooklyn versus Botkyrka) and vacation destinations (Las Vegas versus Dalarna). Through the choices (or lack thereof) of the
spaces we choose to occupy, space becomes a powerful positional good, reliant on an imposed artificial scarcity or supply (Leiss, 1988).

A defining spatial characteristic of the postmodern neoliberal landscape is a dramatic widening of the now global spatial division of labour. As western cities were gutted of their labour intensive industries with associated organised labour, the postindustrial cities of the west turned to entrepreneurial government ideologies. (Harvey, 1989) to attract a hyper mobile pool of ‘creative’ labour and industries rich in cultural and economic capital (Florida, 2010). In a postindustrial landscape, many cities have “managed to survive due to their simultaneous role as place of consumption and consumable places” (Schmid, 2012. p. 54. Emphasis added) in the absence of production oriented industry. For the labour market, this shift towards service-oriented industries, such as tourism and consumer services, has brought easy-entry employment, but a decrease in pay levels and benefits associated with unionised industrial work (Zukin, 2010a). By no means has this shift in urban market orientation been an equalising process. While some cities withered into postindustrial collapse, others have risen to become exorbitant monuments of global capital. Sharon Zukin describes the new citadels of consumption to carry conflicting expectations of the future as “a postindustrial revolution with no human costs, both a corporate city and a new urban village” (2010a, p. 223). As Logan and Molotch (1986) point out, this conflict is materialised between everyday urban dwellers wanting to enjoy the use value of their surroundings, while developers and investors expect to profit through maximising latent exchange values of dense urban areas. Or as Dikeç (2001) puts it, consuming the “city’s exchange value to the detriment of its use value” (p. 1789). With nearly every square meter of contemporary cities being commodified, extracting exchange value at every turn, there should be no doubt that the private space of the home is immune.

Increasingly, what is consumed in these new urban landscapes is the ‘authentic city’, that is to say a simulation of the authentic city. In any effort to produce such authenticity, city managers and citizens turn to heritage designation, new, small-scale development projects and branded neighbourhoods often clinging to a fleeting cultural identity (Zukin, 2010a). The commodification of ‘authentic’ urban landscapes is embedded within a discourse of global competition between hierarchically ranked cities characteristic of neoliberal urbanism. Zukin (ibid.) writes “though we think authenticity refers to a
neighbourhood’s innate qualities, it really expresses our own anxieties about how places change” (p. 220). Relatively new among the urban lexicon, and embedded within the so called ‘urban renaissance’, authenticity has become a powerful tool, for as Zukin puts it “any group that insists on the authenticity of its own tastes in contrast to others can claim moral superiority” (2010a, p. 3). This imbalance of power is represented by what gets preserved, all too often the area’s look and experience, while neglecting to preserve the authentic residents’ communities (ibid.).

3.4 Gentrification
The rise and rapid spread of gentrification in cities around the world has been one of the more directly observable impacts of neoliberalism. The process of gentrification, in which residents with higher disposable incomes and higher education levels invest in previously working class neighbourhoods, displacing prior residents, has had a lasting effect, transforming the physical and social landscapes of cities. Since Ruth Glass (1964) initially coined the term in 1964, the phenomenon has witnessed three waves (Hackworth and Smith, 2001). The first, as irregular pockets of gentrification, followed by a second, “anchoring phase” in the 1970s and 1980s. By this point, neoliberal ideologies and policies had been fully embraced in many western governments, partly contributing to the third phase of gentrification, with larger private developments, often on the neighbourhood scale financed through a public-private-partnership models.

David Ley and Neil Smith have both proposed theories to explain the driving factors behind gentrification. For Ley (1994), gentrification can be explained through a series of lifestyle and demographic shifts of a new professional class. In critiquing Ley’s claims, Smith (1987) proposes the underlying explanation of gentrification through the production-based, rent-gap theory. This theory “refers to an economic gap between actual and potential land values in a given location” (ibid. p. 463). It follows that the larger the gap, the greater potential for gentrification. A look at the temporal and spatial fluxes of capital is crucial in understanding this theory. For as capital followed North American, and to a lesser extent, European suburban growth in the later half of the 20th century, whole inner-city areas, be they industrial, commercial or residential, witnessed devaluation. However, by the 1980s, ground rent in these urban districts had become depressed that the rent gap
between actual and potential rent for a higher use became attractively large, facilitating gentrification. Following the rent gap theory, inner cities gradually came to be spaces of professional jobs, upper-middle-class housing and recreation (Smith, 2008). For Smith, the neoliberal policies facilitating the free flow of capital across nation states have had an important role in encouraging gentrification on a local scale. Though to understand gentrification as solely an organic result of free flowing markets is naïve, as multiple levels of government have played an active role in facilitating gentrification (and in turn displacement) through public-private financing under the banner of ‘urban regeneration’ (Smith, 2002).

On both individual and institutional scales, tourism and gentrification are closely linked. For the individual traveller, one gets to pose “momentarily as a member of a social class superior to one’s own, to play a role of a ‘shopper’ and a spender whose life becomes significant and exciting only when on is exercising power by choosing what to buy” (Fussel, 1972 p. vii. As cited in Culler, 1990). In this capacity, the individual tourist acts as a powerful driver of gentrification, without necessarily being a member of the gentry. Conversely, the shifting tendency of urban governments to pursue entrepreneurialism over managerialism further ingrains tourism with gentrification. Where urban governments were once primarily concerned with providing services, they now shift their focus to competing against rival cities in attracting a ‘creative’ labour force, new corporate headquarters and of course, tourists. Often these three groups intertwine in their desire to participate in, and gaze upon the urban spectacle. As Harvey (1989) explains, “the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in.” (p. 9). These impacts apply to multiple forms of tourism, from the Thomas Cook holiday packages to the new urban tourist living ‘like a local’. Herrera, Smith and Vera link the “intimate connection between gentrification and displacement, fueled by the tourist economy” (2007. p. 294), local government and commercial development in the Canary Islands. Similar results are presented by Gotham (2005) examining tourism gentrification in the French Quarter of New Orleans, driven largely by powerful actors within the development and tourism industries. Füller and Michel (2014) on the other hand, find the individual consumption choices, not the least being holiday flats, of the new urban tourist to drive gentrification in Berlin. The tourists seeks the local experience, but
rarely does so on a local’s schedule. Spending long hours in the café, meandering through museums and gallery districts, and drinking cocktails on a Tuesday, the new urban tourists’ consumption choices fuel the gentrifying economy.

3.5 Understanding Urban Tourism
Perhaps no act is as tied to consuming space as tourism. Initially, leisure tourism provided an escape from the squalor and commotion characteristic of European cities during the industrial revolution, to tranquil locations such as England’s Bath and the French Riviera. However, with massive social and technological shifts over the subsequent centuries, the accessibility and spatial scope of tourism broadened, bringing tourists to exotic, cosmopolitan cities in addition to the well trodden resort destinations. As Urry (1995) outlines, organization innovations, rather than technological innovations, are responsible for propelling certain tourism models to economic success and cultural significance. He provides the Thomas Cook voucher system and the inclusive holiday as important organisational innovations responsible for the success of the steamships and jet engines, respectively. Similarly, I would argue that it was the organization innovation of sites such as Airbnb rather than Web 2.0 that has allowed many collaborative consumption models to flourish. And though the relationship between cities and tourism may seem obvious, it was not until the late 1980s that researchers in the fields of both urban and tourism studies really turned their attention to this linkage (Ashworth & Page, 2011). Of course, there are many possible readings of this linkage, but in keeping with my research aim, I turn to the social understandings and impacts of tourism.

In his seminal poststructuralist writings on tourism, Sociologist John Urry (1990) describes the tourist gaze as a set of expectations tourists carry with them in their quest for an ‘authentic’ experience of place. These expectations, however, are not wholly constructed by the individual tourist, but from a collection of actors including, but not limited to, travel agencies, media portrayals and local governments. Playing into cultural and racial stereotypes, some locals may seize the opportunity to benefit financially from these expectations, while maintaining a distance, but overall, the tourist gaze is seen as a
destructive force reducing cultures to commodities. The quest for the ‘authentic’ has long been a component of the tourists’ gaze. Urry argues this infatuation may even predate similar aspirations characteristic among the so-called ‘urban pioneers’ gentrifying the frontier neighbourhoods as described by Zukin (2010a). For MacCannel (1973), modern tourists seek authentic places just as pilgrims sought the sacred in an effort to escape the alienating effects of modernity. Drawn by this fascination for the authentic, tourism intrudes into local’s lives, an unacceptable act curtailed by the organization of ‘staged authenticity’ of tourism-oriented spaces. Pearce and Moscardo (1986) make a point of categorizing between ‘staged’ and ‘real’ people and environments and how tourists perceive the intersection of these qualities. For example, a staged environment populated by staged people will present an experience quite different than meeting authentic people in an authentic environment. Fueled by popular media, the tourist can gaze upon and consume foreign landscapes from the comforts of their sofa. This postmodern reading of tourism suggests that “there is much less of the sense of the authentic, the once-in-a-lifetime gaze, and much more of the endless availability of gazes through a frame at the flick of a switch or a click.” (Urry & Larsen, 2013, P. 113), arguably bringing the ‘end of tourism’.

Of course, calling for the end of tourism can be seen as a drastic claim, but there are observable trends in tourism that depart from the traditional icons and experiences popularised within the tourism industry during the 20th Century. There seem to be two conflicting paths tourism in the postmodern era have taken. For Urry (1990), the post-tourist, short on time and weary of the seemingly endless portrayals of foreign landscapes, seeks the blatantly simulated landscapes, such as Las Vegas or Disney World, knowing full well they are part of a ‘game’. On the other hand, there is an emerging trend in tourism and research alike, ‘new urban tourism’ or can be described as a deepening of the tourist gaze into previously ignored places in a continued quest for the authentic. Tightly tied to the rise of the experience economy (Klingman, 2007), tourists place value in the experience over the product, abandoning the ‘placelessness’ of traditional tourist destinations (Entrikin, 1991) for dynamic, authentic and creative urban areas (Füller & Michel, 2014). Think dumplings in Chinatown rather than a trip to the observation deck of the Statue of Liberty. As Füller and Michel (ibid.) point out, the impact of this ‘new urban tourism’, does not necessarily result in crowded landmarks and busy ticket offices characteristic of traditional
tourism, but takes place on a much smaller scale, making it difficult for local governments to track, record and plan for tourism. Nevertheless, new urban tourism still shares many similarities with preexisting forms, including its impacts on the socio-economic landscapes of destinations.

3.6 Policy pursuing spatial justice

Since the 1980s, cities have witnessed a rise and fall of local grassroots protests against the loss of affordable housing. These social movements are tied closely to neoliberalism both in rebellion but also in performance. Firstly they have emerged out of a state led social policy vacuum and secondly, their protests are often suppressed through the neoliberal penal state (Wacquant, 2009). For Zukin (2010b), a critical scholar of gentrification, such community protests are “necessary but futile”. In some cases, observes Zukin (2010a), this sense of a culture of resistance ironically becomes subject to commodification and consumption as has been the case in New York City’s Alphabet City neighbourhood. Given such futility of public protest in the face of gentrification, what then is the role of the planner? Purcell (2009) mirrors Zukin’s concerns, seeing the current urban policy geared towards collaborative practices unable to confront the negative impacts of neoliberalism favouring counter-hegemonic mobilizations. Fainstein (2011), Harvey (1993), Zukin (2010a), Newman & Wyly (2006) and Marcuse (2012) among others have called for the need of urban policy to address this aspect of neighbourhood change through formalized policies.

The social and spatial unevenness intrinsic to capitalist market economies have led a growing body of researchers, practitioners and activists to take action, calling for progressive policy recommendations citing the work of the influential French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre. More specifically, they build upon, and contextualise, Lefebvre’s notion of ‘the right to the city’, or, the right to participate in the social, political and administrative life of the city and a right to be different (Dikeç, 2001). As Marcuse (2012) outlines, in his essay whose right(s) to what city?, developers, politicians, the state and the media, already have a powerful right to the city, but what is of concern is to extend the right to “those who
do not now have it”. This group is understood as those who face the five faces of oppression: class exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and direct violence (Young, 1990). Guided by Lefebvre’s right to the city and Marion Young’s political readings of justice, Susan Fainstein (2011) calls for spatial policy to adopt the political understanding of justice, something that was particularly absent given urban planning’s positivist beginnings. Unlike some of her colleagues within critical urban theory academy, Fainstein sees no benefit in waiting for revolution in order to pursue spatial justice, making the case to work within the “present context of capitalist urbanization” (p. 5). She argues that working within the current socio-political system can achieve incremental improvements towards a just city. In explaining her notion, Fainstein uses the strength of democracy, diversity and equity as indicators of justice. Equity in particular is relevant to my theoretical lens as it refers to the distribution of public benefits in an equal manner. It does not dictate that each member of society be treated equal, but rather be treated appropriately. An evaluation of public policy from an equity standpoint asks firsts who benefits, and second to what extent. Although not always directly addressed, notions of spatial justice lie at the root of the arguments presented for and against the rise of Airbnb, a platform that I will now further explore.
4. Case Study

After gathering secondary qualitative data in the form of media reports, laws and reports through the aforementioned methods, I now present an introduction to the rise of Airbnb and similar platforms, specifically in Stockholm. The rise of private short-term rentals facilitated by online platforms such as Airbnb has allowed millions to monetize their apartment, opening their doors to travellers looking for alternatives to hostels and hotels. A part of the broader ‘sharing economy’ phenomenon, private short-term rentals challenge one of the cornerstones of urban planning policy, land use control. This relevance to urban policy presents an interesting case study deserving deeper research than is currently observed in academic discussions. In order to develop an understanding of the rise of private short-term rentals I turn to the state of Airbnb in Stockholm, Sweden as a case study.

4.1 Introducing Airbnb

To understand the rapid rise in private short-term rentals over the past decade it is instrumental to examine Airbnb, the undeniable industry leader and as of late, sharing economy poster child. There are other similar websites, such as Roomorama, Wimdu and OneFineStay, but Airbnb remains the dominant actor. In their own words, “Airbnb is a global community marketplace that connects travelers seeking authentic, high-quality accommodations with hosts who offer unique places to stay” (Airbnb, 2015a). Airbnb’s story begins in San Francisco with a couple of recent design school grads, Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia, trying to make ends meet by subletting two extra beds in their San Francisco three bedroom apartment to visiting conference goers. With some encouragement and financing, the pair went on to facilitate others doing the same at conferences across the United States through their web domain airbedandbreakfast.com. The site eventually found a demand well beyond short conference stays, with travellers looking for a service a little more formalised and reliable than the free apartment sharing alternative, Couchsurfing.com, while still fostering the sense of authentic neighbourhood accommodation. Since its beginnings in 2008, Airbnb has witnessed incredible growth in
the number of guests booking with the service. Looking at the approximate number of
bookings in its first years illustrates this growth, with 21,000 in 2009, 140,000 in 2010 and
800,000 in 2011 (Pressier, 2014). The website boasts that on New Year’s Eve of 2014, over
550,000 guests used airbnb to find accommodation compared to 9000 just five years
prior (Airbnb, 2015c). Currently, Airbnb books roughly 400,000 guests per night and offers
more than one million accommodations ranging from a spare sofa to tree houses to
medieval castles (Airbnb, 2015b). And as of March 2015, Airbnb has entered into a
sponsorship agreement with the International Olympic Committee to serve as the “official
alternative accommodation service provider” of the 2016 games (Airbnb, 2015d).

The site serves as a broker connecting prospective guests with willing hosts. With
each transaction, Airbnb takes a 3 percent fee from the host and a 6-12 percent (depending
on the price) from the guest. Airbnb promotes the opportunity for hosts to “monetize their
extra space and showcase it to an audience of millions”. Hosts are able to upload listing
photos, rules, guidelines and other details as well as set nightly, weekly and monthly rates.
They can also adjust their listings availability to suit them best. There are no listing fees
and no minimum booking requirements for hosts. Prospective guests can browse listings
by selecting a destination and setting the number of guests, price range and dates. Once a
desirable listing is found, the prospective guests then requests to make a booking. Once
confirmed by the host, the booking is then filed. At any point throughout the process guests
and hosts are able to message via the website’s built in messaging system. Though before
the payment is made, exchanging emails or other contact methods is automatically
restricted in an attempt to prevent users from circumventing the service fees. To help
illustrate the process of booking a rental on Airbnb, see Figures iv, v, vi and vii.

Beyond the commercial and popular success of Airbnb, the site also adheres to
Botsman and Rogers (2011) above mentioned four principles of collaborative consumption
models. In its purest form, Airbnb and similar private short-term rental platforms are
tapping into the idling capacity of people’s residences, whether in the form of a spare
couch, bedroom or entire apartment. The millions of hosts currently interested in
subletting or sharing their idle space, coupled with the hundreds of thousands prospective
nightly guests speaks to the strong critical mass supporting the service. Trust in strangers is
mainly reassured through a bilateral guest/host rating scheme not unlike many other
ecommerce sites, a mandatory identification check and as well as a host protection insurance. As Zervas et al. (2015) point out, Airbnb hosts in Austin, Texas witness an atypically high average rating of 4.7 out of 5 stars (95% of listings boasting a user generated rating of 4.5 to 5 stars), even when compared to listings for identical units Tripadvisor, a popular travel booking and rating web service. Zervas et al suggest social factors could be at play in explaining the high average ratings speaking to the belief in the commons among Airbnb participants. Each new host or guest using Airbnb only serves to strengthen the network.

While Airbnb’s listings represent urban, suburban and rural landscapes, there is a distinctly urban character to the service. This is reflected in not only the neighbourhood guides featured on the site, but in their oft repeated public relations claim of being “committed to making cities better” (Airbnb, 2015b). In fact, the sharing economy on a wider scale can be seen as a distinctly urban phenomenon. Botsman and Rogers (2011) suggest that the sharing economy has successfully used technology to harness a latent potential of the strength of weak ties in cities (Granovetter, 1974). While proponents are quick to hail the advancements within the tech sector as the driving force behind the sharing economy, it depends on the socio, economic and environmental qualities of cities. This close relationship only serves to highlight the importance and influence urban planning and policy can play in the future of the movement.
Figure iv. The Airbnb homepage.

8 Reviews

Summary

Accuracy ★★★★★
Communication ★★★★★
Cleanliness ★★★★★

Location ★★★★★
Check In ★★★★★
Value ★★★★★

We had a great time in Stockholm!
The apartment was lovely (matching the pictures), very well located in the trendiest neighborhood within a walking distance to bars, cafes, restaurants, shops and T-bana (subway) stop.
Alfonsina was a great host, who provided important tips and promptly.
+ More
From Leiden, Netherlands · May 2015

Great apartment, exactly as described. Light and airy, great neighbourhood. Bed easily slept two. Great location, very clean and Alfonsina was really helpful. Definitely would recommend this apartment!

From United Kingdom · May 2015

Nous avons été conquis par cet appartement.
Il est agréable à vivre, très cosy et lumineux.
Sa situation : 7min à pied du métro ; 5min à pied du magasin d'alimentation.
La propriétaire Alfonsina est très serviable pour nos nécessités ce qui rend les
+ More

Céline
James Thoem

**Figure v.** Browsing Airbnb listings in Stockholm, Sweden.

**Figure vi.** Viewing an Airbnb listing in Stockholm.
4.2 Proponents of Airbnb

Fulfilling Botsman and Roger’s four principles of the sharing economy, along with an ever increasing market share and significant revenue and investments have made Airbnb into the archetype of the sharing economy for many. With its rise, the service has gathered significant attention in editorial content by both proponents and critics alike. Proponents of Airbnb are quick to present the company’s economic success. In early 2013, economist
Arun Sundararajan (2013) noted that “in 2013, corporate America will need to pay very close attention to this new paradigm”. Despite the company’s marginal market share within the hospitality industry, it was valued at just under 13 billion US dollars in 2014, more than large multinational hotel chains Hyatt and Wyndham (Pressier, 2014). But perhaps more telling of Sundararajan’s statement than current market share, are the results of a report out of Boston University finding that “each 10% increase in Airbnb supply results in a 0.35% decrease in monthly hotel room revenue” (Zervos et al, 2014). With Austin, Texas as a case study, their empirical research found increases in Airbnb listings to carry a more significant impact on lower end hotels in the area. A very significant relationship given the aforementioned rate at which the number of listings that Airbnb has witnessed in its first six years.

As Zervos et al. (ibid) show, the industry most negatively impacted by the rise of Airbnb, is the hotel industry, and more specifically, the lower cost hotels. Some argue, that by tapping into an existing housing stock, Airbnb offers a more environmentally sound (or less carbon intensive) alternative to traditional multinational hotel chains. In 2014, Airbnb (2014a) commissioned an environmental impact assessment to compare their average guests impact to that of Hilton and Marriott hotel chains. While critical of the induced demand on air and motor travel created by Airbnb, the report found Airbnb properties to produce 61 percent and 89 percent less carbon emissions in North America and Europe, respectively, compared to their competitors in the hospitality industry. The study also found Airbnb to outperform Hilton and Marriott in waste generation, water and energy consumption. However, methodological ambiguity and unfounded conclusions call into question the reliability of the research. More thorough, unbiased research into this topic would be valuable. Nevertheless, the absence of daily housekeeping services, single use toiletries and use driven construction suggests Airbnb and other short-term rental platforms to carry less of an wasteful impact.

To all accounts, the great recession served as a turning point for Airbnb. Not only did the platform establish itself in this economic climate, but an incredibly marketable storyline emerged. In interviews and editorials, Airbnb founders often point to the financially stressed urbanites that have turned to hosting on Airbnb to pay rent. In a 2014 feature in New York Magazine (Pressier, 2014), Brian Chesky cites an email from 2009:
“‘Hi Airbnb, I’m not exaggerating when I tell you that you literally saved us... My husband and I just married after having lost our jobs and investments in the stock-market crash. We watched our savings dwindle to a point where we didn’t have enough money to pay our own rent ... You gave us the ability to keep our home’”. With this emerging conversation, the mantra: “Airbnb makes cities more affordable” (Airbnb, 2014b) was born. Airbnb and private short-term rental proponents often turn to this point in the face of critics suggesting that the platform drives up housing prices and reduces availability. Another, more thorough report commissioned by Airbnb found the average New York City host to earn $6,160 USD annually, or $513 per month, well below the average rent paid in the city of $1,387 (Rosen, 2013). The study was also keen to point out that 62 percent of participants “noted that income generated via Airbnb helped them to stay in their homes” (p. 4).

And finally, proponents of private short-term rentals argue that these types of services are superior to the alternatives in that they offer a more ‘authentic’ experience to for the guest. This quest for authenticity among travellers is not especially new. As MacCannel (1973) points out, tourists have long sought the ‘back regions’ of their destinations, as they offer both intimacy and authentic experiences. Tied closely to desire for authentic experiences has been the rise of the experiential economy. Built upon the lifestyle-oriented consumption developed through the 1990s, the experience economy is built around offering consumers experiences along with their purchases. “These days” writes Klingman (2007), “what sells is not products or services but experiences attached to a product”. This is exemplified in the success of the Airbnb model, where the company holds very little actual assets, but promotes the potential experiences that can take place when you vacation in someone’s home. In an online article titled How To Make a Killing on Airbnb (Grothaus, 2015), one successful Airbnb host reaffirms the role of the experience and authenticity, “people choose Airbnb because they want a break from the traditional and are looking for an affordable, authentic getaway... create an Airbnb listing that focuses on experiences, not the property facts”. You don’t have to look far to see traces of Silicon Valley utopian thought surrounding private short-term rental platforms. As one travel journalist writes, “make friends by sharing a meal or renting a room in a local home... richer, more authentic travels further the international community, enrich the senses,
make travel more fulfilling, and truly make the world a better place” (Kontis, March 28, 2015).

4.3 Critiques of Airbnb

These accommodating views, however, are not shared by all. The critiques of Airbnb and similar short-term rental platforms cover a wide range of issues. Early critics of Airbnb relied on a sensational fear of the unknown. Media has, at times, turned to discussing the risks of renting to strangers. But as one Guardian piece points out, Airbnb guests “tend to be nerdy Scandinavian students who bring their own breakfast cereal and leave the place tidier than they found it” (Dakers, 2014). The most salient critics of the platform have addressed the social, environmental and economic impacts of the platform. Dominating the discussion of the social impacts of short-term rental platforms are concerns over access, gentrification, organised labour and the platforms approach to local laws and taxation.

Despite the rhetoric of building a global community through sharing spaces, access to Airbnb is limited by unequal access to the internet that is often fragmented along lines of socioeconomic position, age and geography. Though it is worth acknowledging that while some social impacts could be direct results of the rise of Airbnb, others could be larger social issues that materialise through Airbnb markets just as they do in other markets and or social networks. Following the United States’ renewed diplomatic and economic cooperation with Cuba in January 2015, Airbnb announced it would begin building a network of hosts. The only limitation, however, is that with only four percent of homes connected to the internet, the country lacks the required infrastructure to accommodate the platform (Koebler, 2015). Foreign travellers can finally enjoy the ‘authentic’ Cuba, but the opposite is unlikely. The global asymmetry of the digital divide isn’t the only cause for concern, for as Edelman and Luca (2014) point out, Airbnb data can reveal discrimination among users on a more local level. According to the study, the same host rating systems established to build trust among participants can lead to discrimination based on race. While the study acknowledges that race isn’t the only factor at play, it finds that “non-black hosts are able to charge approximately 12% more than black hosts, holding location, rental characteristics, and quality consistent” (ibid., pg. 4). And as the San Francisco based Anti-
 eviction Mapping Project (2014) points out, there is a generational dynamic to access as well as “airbnb is best suited for the young and flexible who have the luxury of staying elsewhere while renting out their entire apartment”.

More relevant to the field of urban planning is the critical argument that Airbnb and similar platforms take up otherwise useful housing, drive speculation and fuel gentrification. Taking aim at the notion of using hosting revenue to cover otherwise unaffordable rent, Henwood (2015) argues in an online article titled What the Sharing Economy Takes that “Such practices take units off the rental market and grease the wheels of gentrification”. While proponents argue that Airbnb “makes cities more affordable” (Airbnb, 2014b), others suggest to readers that “In an attempt to make an extra buck, you may be slowly screwing yourself out of the market” (Speri, 2014). Although the level of causality is unfounded, a recent private study found rent to have risen rapidly in Harlem and Budstuy, the New York neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of Airbnb listings (Pressier, 2014). In many cases, the media attention around this issue reflects the concerns of community initiatives and elected officials. Grassroots opposition movements have sprung up in cities such as Barcelona, San Francisco and Berlin, where gentrification, tourism and housing availability have become hot button issues. In San Francisco, the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (2014) has taken issue with the rise of web-enabled private short-term rental platforms by bringing to light the connection to gentrification and no-fault evictions. The report finds that Airbnb and similar services are primarily utilised by the young and affluent, with 59 percent of hosts annually earning more than $70,000 and 52 percent of potential hosts offering unoccupied units in an undersupplied housing market. In New York City, State Senator Lisa Krueger has long been battling Airbnb over legal and housing issues. “Every apartment turned into an illegal hotel with the assistance of Airbnb is another home unavailable to everyday New Yorkers”, she argued in a 2013 press statement (Krueger, 2013). In the most extensive, publicly funded look into the impacts of Airbnb, the New York Attorney General’s office found the service to be problematic. Beyond violations of fire, safety, zoning and tax regulations, the report found that by being booked for more than half the study year, nearly half of the listings took up valuable long term housing opportunities (Schneiderman, 2014). The study also confirmed the aforementioned relationship to gentrification, as the three most rapidly gentrifying
neighbourhoods in Manhattan were home to a disproportional share (40 percent) of Airbnb revenue in New York, while reservations in the boroughs of Queens, Staten Island and The Bronx combined represented only three percent. If Airbnb truly is making cities more affordable (Airbnb, 2014b), it is doing so in small geographic concentrations. Of particular concern for housing advocates are “power hosters”, an individual or organization renting out multiple apartments on a short-term basis only. While hosts with more than three units represented just six percent of total hosts, they account for 37 percent of revenue in New York City. Furthermore, these so called “power hosters” have between 10 to 85 listings and have brought in an average profit of just less than $500,000 a year (Pressier, 2014). This pattern is not unique to New York, in fact, hosts with multiple listings make up 40 percent of Airbnb’s their business (Grothaus, 2015).

Other critics have argued Airbnb’s sustainability claims. For Schor (2014), Airbnb cannot soundly argue that the platform is environmentally friendly. Schor (2014) finds that by offering more affordable accommodations, Airbnb and similar platforms encourage further carbon intensive travel. “The companies can’t have it both ways” she writes “creating new economic activity and reducing carbon emissions - because the two are closely linked”. While the platform may be more environmentally sustainable than its multinational competitors, the induced consumption incurred by offering more affordable travel may overshadow these gains. Furthermore, Airbnb’s aforementioned sustainability report came under critique for promoting obscure environmental impact measurements. For example, the touted noted that 83% of hosts engage in sustainability practices, a quality measured by the presence of at least one energy efficient appliance. After questioning the methodology and results associated with the study, one online article labeled it as mere “infographic science” (Montgomery, 2014). However, only a fraction of media surrounding the release of the report picked up on these shortcomings.

And just as the many proponents latch onto the economic benefits of hosting and staying with private short-term rentals, critics express concerns surrounding the economics of this branch of the ‘sharing economy’. For some, Airbnb and other new web-based business models relying on social networks (i.e. Uber, Lyft & TaskRabbit) have appropriated the positive affiliations of the phrase in a phenomena they dub ‘sharewashing’. In a similar vein, the Associated Press’ Stylebook discourages journalists
from using the term ‘ride-sharing’, preferring the terms ride-booking or ride-hailing for their accuracy. Calling for a revaluation of what qualifies as the sharing economy, one journalist notes that “a real sharing enterprise isn’t driven by profits for shareholders; it’s driven by sharing resources, knowledge, and decision-making responsibilities” (Bliss, 2015). As the vice-president of Norway’s SpareBank wrote in a recent op-ed, “It is safe to assume that... [the] founders of Airbnb, Uber and Google have no altruistic motives in the sharing economy” (Hernaes, 2015). And most scathingly of all, Henwood (2015) writes that “The sharing economy is a nice way for rapacious capitalists to monetize the desperation of people in the post-crisis economy while sounding generous, and to evoke a fantasy of community in an atomized population”.

But one of the more common concerns surrounding the rise of Airbnb and private short-term rental platforms has been their relationship to local taxation, regulations and zoning laws. Municipal authorities including New York, Montreal, Barcelona and Berlin have undertaken action against Airbnb and cohorts. Citing unpaid taxes, housing conflicts, and legal issues, these cities have fined both hosts and Airbnb as well as entered into litigation. In New York, where a 2012 court case surrounding an Airbnb user made headlines, residents are barred from renting out their residential properties for less than 29 days. Though the intent of the law is to restrict illegal transient hotels, the case also brought up a large discussion surrounding the sidestepping of hotel tax laws and undermining of organized hospitality labour. New York State Senator Liz Krueger is especially critical of the site, raising the impact of in-demand short-term rental services have on the few affordable rental units available (Speri, 2014). Despite the legal issues in New York, Airbnb continues to facilitate short-term rentals in the city. In Barcelona, authorities fined Airbnb and seven other private short-term rental platforms €30,000 for offering rooms that were not registered with the regional Tourism Registry. While the fine was more symbolic, Airbnb argued that “Barcelona should stay on the cutting edge of innovation” sticking to their argument that the service makes cities more affordable (Kassam, 2014). Meanwhile, in Quebec, authorities are targeting the hosts rather than the facilitators, such as Airbnb. Citing laws restricting unregistered short-term sublets, provincial agents are going as far as to book reservations to prove guilt. As of May 2013, 60 hosts in Quebec had been fined compared to the more than 2,000 listings posted on Airbnb
4.4 Private Short-term Rental Policy

With the rapid rise of sharing economy platforms facilitated by technological and organisation innovations, governments have had a rather difficult time addressing, encouraging or regulating their growth. As Johal and Zon (2015), have aptly put it, “to date, the reactions from governments has felt like a frantic game of ‘whack-a-mole’” (p. 4). As previously addressed, the sharing economy in practice is quite broad, including everything from Facebook to local tool libraries. But that is not to say that governments have a role in regulating every aspect of this new phenomenon, but to date have (or more appropriately should have) focused mainly on the transportation, retail, accommodation, labour and finance actors. Of course, for this piece of research, regulation into the accommodation side of the sharing economy is of primary concern. Many may question why something as seemingly benign as a network built around sharing deserves state regulations, but it is important to remember that “It is also in the interest of the broader public to make sure that the sharing economy is not a clever means for people or businesses to reduce their tax liability, thereby placing a higher burden on the general public” (Johal and Zon, 2015. p. 11).

As they exist, private short-term rentals challenge one of urban planning’s fundamental tasks, land-use planning and management. But given the size, popularity and resources of Airbnb, attempting to outright stop it seems politically and economically prohibitive. However, this is not to say that services such as Airbnb should be allowed free reign. In fact, many cities have begun imposing laws limiting, or even restricting, the use of private short-term rental platforms, citing issues surrounding housing shortages, taxation and legalities. Given the unique and local implications on such rental markets and local laws, policy should of course vary from context to context, avoiding one-size-fits-all policy...
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recommendations. The reactionary policies, limiting, restricting or even facilitating private short-term rental platforms has tended to be observed on municipal levels of government, though in some cases changes to federal law must be made. In order to highlight the context sensitivity of such and address a range of policy approaches, I present a brief account of four efforts being carried out on the municipal level by New York City, London, Amsterdam and Berlin in Figure vii. A deeper, more thorough look into the political motivation, implications and effectiveness of each policy approach should be reserved for further research. Of course each of these cities exist within their own context, and to carry their policies directly into Stockholm could be problematic, given the city's unique housing situation.
**Table: Policies Addressing Private Short-Term Rentals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>New York City</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>Berlin</th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Airbnb Listings (2014)</strong></td>
<td>34,359</td>
<td>8,176</td>
<td>9,979</td>
<td>“1000+”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Targeting unlicensed hotels, housing availability and safety.</td>
<td>To modernise housing policy and promote tourism</td>
<td>Maintain residential units as residential, rising rents</td>
<td>Regulation and tax collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy goal</strong></td>
<td>Prohibit illegal hotels in residential units. Applies to short-term rentals under 30 days. Does not apply if host is present</td>
<td>Allowing private short-term rentals for less than 90 days a year.</td>
<td>Restrict private short-term rentals below 30 days in certain neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Accommodate 'private rentals’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influential actors</strong></td>
<td>New York State Courts, State Senator Liz Krueger, former mayor Bloomberg, housing associations and more recently, Airbnb lobbying efforts</td>
<td>Brandon Lewis, Conservative MP &amp; Minister of Communities and Local Government. Karen Buck, Labour MP. Airbnb</td>
<td>Hotel industry, activists, Airbnb, Berlin Senate, Senator for Urban Development</td>
<td>Amsterdam City Council, Airbnb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure iii. A sampling of recent policies addressing private short-term rentals*
4.5 An Introduction to Swedish Housing and Tenure Types

To understand Stockholm’s housing situation is to understand Swedish politics. For over a century, the discussion surrounding the quality and quantity of housing in the nation’s capital have reflected greater political and economic ideologies on local, national and international scales. But before proceeding into a brief history of housing and politics in Sweden, I will first familiarize the reader with the differing forms of housing. At the base of the Swedish housing regime lies a rhetorical tension between whether or not housing should be seen as a social right or a market good. The current situation seems to lie somewhere between the two, culturally rooted in the former but increasingly shifting towards a market good. Currently divided into four main categories - owner occupancy, Allmännyttan, hyresrätt, bostadsrätt, and second-hand rentals- each form of Swedish housing tenure reflects this right/good perspective in a unique way. Each category can be described simply as such:

**Owner Occupancy** - At just 10%, owner occupancy is the least common form of tenure in Stockholm while the remainder takes the form of multi unit dwellings (Stockholm Stad, 2014). This pattern is the opposite as observed on the national level, with single family homes as the most common housing form in Sweden. In Stockholm this form of tenure exists almost exclusively as single family homes and is bought and sold as a commodity, (or as close to a commodity that land can be) (Bengtson, 2013).

**Rental Apartments** - Rental apartments appear under two main categories, leased either by arms length municipal housing corporations (*Allmännyttan*) or private housing management companies (*Hyresrätt*). In both cases, tenants with a ‘first hand contract’ are able to trade leasehold with other contract holders in order to change location or apartment size without having to return to the lengthy administrative queues.
Municipal Rental Apartments (*Allmännyttan*) - Representing 16.7 percent of units within multi dwelling buildings in Stockholm (Stockholm Stad, 2014), municipal rental apartments only partially resemble the means-tested social housing portfolios built up in the 20th century in many other western cities. While social housing in many European and North American countries are specifically reserved for those on the fringes of society, Sweden’s allmännyttan is open for all. This difference in models can be observed in the literal translation of the word allmännyttan as ‘every man’s good’. Until recently, these arms length municipal housing corporations were to act on a not-for-profit basis, relying heavily on state loans and subsidies. However, new legislation enacted in 2010 mandated these organisations to act “in a business-like way” (Bengtson, 2013. p. 178). And although this clause is up to interpretation, it is a definite departure from the previous mandate of municipal housing corporations. These units are accessed through a first come, first serve basis with prospective tenants sitting in a administrative queue until a unit is available. This law can be best observed in newly built municipal rental apartments, which although they qualify as *Allmännyttan*, are listed for prices considerably above affordable housing rates.

Private rental apartments (*Hyresrätt*) - Since the ‘system shift’ of the early nineties, municipal housing has given way to private rental as the most common rental type, now representing 27.4% of multi-dwelling units. (Stockholm Stad, 2014). Though owned and maintained by private rental companies, Hyresrätt are subject to rent control established by the national government. Rent control and with indefinite contracts combined with rapid urban growth in Stockholm has made this style of housing in short supply and like the above mentioned tenure, private rental apartments are also in great demand, with long queues for prospective tenants.

Tenant-ownership (*Bostadsrätt*) - Though commonly translated into English as condominiums, the legal arrangements of *bostadsrätts* differ from condominiums in many western countries. Since the system shift of the early nineties, this model has grown to be the most common form of tenure in Stockholm, currently representing 55.9 percent of the multi-dwelling units in the city (Stockholm Stad, 2014). Like condominiums, bostadsrätts
are units within a multi-dwelling residence traded on an open real estate market. However, rather than purchasing a physical portion of real estate, a bostadsrätt purchaser pays for a share in a housing association, which in turns owns the building. Membership of the housing association comes with certain rights and obligations that if neglected, can result in forfeiting one’s membership, and therefore financial investment. According to the Swedish Tenant Act, subletting a bostadsrätt is subject to the approval of the housing association, that if circumvented, could breach the membership agreement resulting in a forced sale (Dagensnyheter, October 13, 2014). The growth of bostadsrätts over the past 30 years is a result of either new build projects, or conversion of former Hyresrätt in which tenants are invited to buy into a newly formed housing association, often at below market rates. Reflecting the idea of housing as a right rather than a commodity, residents are unable to own a Bostadsrätt and hold a allmännyttan lease at the same time. Recent changes have legalised owner-occupied models similar to western condominium definitions if built within new, multi dwelling buildings, but as Bengtson (2013) observes, this form of tenure has received little initial uptake. Despite the formalisation of owner-occupied, multi story dwelling units in 2009 similar to more popular condominium definitions, this type of tenure has been slow to catch on.

**A note on subletting** -Like the other forms of tenure, subletting in Sweden exists in a unique way. The subletting of private homes, *bostadsrätt*, *hyresrätt*, and *allmännyttan* are all subject to laws determining length of sublet, potential profit and acceptable reasons for subletting. Subletting laws pertain to units rented out to serve only as residence, and any person or organisation that rents three or more units is considered to be operating a business, in which case the subletting laws do not apply. Until recently, subletting was restricted as to the amount of profit the subletter could realise from a transaction. If rent exceeded this limit, the subtenant could legally and retroactively reclaim all profits through the national rent tribunal. But a new law introduced in February of 2013 allows subletters to establish rent in a ‘market like’ way, by introducing ‘reasonable rate of return’ on the housing market (currently set at four percent) into an equation that previously only considered capital costs (rent or mortgage payment) and operating costs (utilities, wear and tear of furniture, tenancy board fees, etc.). If rent exceeds the amount calculated
through this new formula, the subtenant may still take the issue to the national rent tribunal, in order to lower future rent payments, but may no longer claim a retroactive reimbursement (Jagvillhabostad.nu, 2013; Regeringskansliet, 2013).

4.6 Political History of Swedish Housing

In distinguishing different rental market structures, Kemeny (1995) differentiates dualist systems commonly found in liberal, Anglo-Saxon countries (i.e. Australia, Canada, USA, UK) from unitary systems traditionally observed in Northern European countries (i.e. Norway, Sweden, Netherlands). While rent and tenure in dualist systems are negotiated according to market behaviour between two private parties (landlord and tenant), unitary systems are characterised by state intervention aiming to de-commodify a portion of the housing stock for the general public. The later system was characteristic of Sweden through much of the 20th century, making housing a pillar of the comprehensive Swedish welfare system. Universal housing policy synonymous with the Swedish welfare state was established in the 1947 Housing Provision Act (bostadsförsörjningslagen) in which the roles of municipal housing corporations, private rental companies and tenant-ownership cooperatives were outlined. While municipally run rental corporations were legally obliged to provide quality housing to all, regardless of income and other characteristics, private providers would provide for other segments of the market while still observing collective rent negotiations that suppressed prices (Bengtsson, 2013). Rent levels for both public and private providers were to be negotiated between landlords and a well established national tenant movement. Owner occupation of multi-dwelling units was also restricted during this era, leading to the rise of tenant-ownership systems (bostadsrätt). This housing regime was entrenched in the coming decades, through the implementation of the million program, in which one million new units were built in Sweden between 1965 and 1974 to accommodate a housing shortage coupled with a rapidly growing population. Though with the rise of neo-liberal ideology, governmentality and policy since the 1980s (Larner, 2000), the Swedish housing sector has transformed in what Clark and Johnson (2009) refers to as
the ‘system switch’, with a unitary systems increasingly losing ground to a neoliberal commodified dualistic system.

Governing for over eighty of the last hundred years, the Social Democrats established what is commonly referred to as the ‘Swedish Model’, including a unitary housing system providing "good-quality housing at a cost that everyone could afford" (ibid, 178). Though the Swedish Democrats arguably “turned rightwards” (Rozworski, 2015) in the mid eighties, the liberal-conservative party, Moderaterna, were elected in 1991 on their platform of privatisation and spending cuts, giving them their first governing majority in over six decades. From there, they quickly took to dismantling the publicly funded housing model built up under the Social Democrats, transforming the national housing sector from a 30 billion crown burden on the public purse to a 31 billion crown income (Statens Offentiliga Utredningar, 1999. Cited in Clark & Johnson, 2009). As leading Swedish economists have noted, this commodification of the housing sector between 1986 and 2001 has allowed Sweden to “gradually become one of the most liberal market-governed housing markets in the Western world” (Lind & Lundström, 2007. As cited and translated in Hedin et al., 2011). While drastic cuts in subsidies were carried out, the pillars of the Swedish housing regime (negotiated rents, tenure styles, and integrated public and private rental markets) were largely untouched, speaking to the power of path dependence of housing regimes (Bengtson, 2013). Despite previous critiques of the decommodification of the Swedish housing stock, the subsequent Social Democrat led government did little to reconstruct housing legislation and policy, essentially endorsing the ‘system switch’ set into action (Clark & Johnson, 2009). In 2006, when a Moderaterna-led coalition regained government, the roll-back of welfare systems continued, including further changes to the housing sector such as: allowing owner-occupied units in new built multi-dwelling buildings (read: condominiums), municipal sales of public rental housing and the transformation of private rentals into co-operative ownerships (bostadsrätt) (ibid). The coalition continued to pursue a dualistic system by implementing a set of policies to stimulate owner-occupation, specifically among first time buyers who could otherwise not be eligible for such loans. The most recent election transferred power back to a Social Democrat led coalition, which while generally accommodating this ‘system switch’ tweaked some policies to address housing availability and affordability. David Harvey argues that
“Sweden is an example of what might be called ‘circumscribed neoliberalization’, and its generally superior social condition reflects this fact” (Harvey, 2005). However, as Swedish scholars are keen to refute, this ‘circumscribed neoliberalization’ does not apply to Swedish housing. Nevertheless, while the idea of housing in Sweden has rapidly shifting towards a commodified market good, there remains legacies of the ‘Swedish model’ in which housing is a right.

4.7 Housing Issues in Stockholm: Affordability, Availability & Segregation

Affordability - In a housing regime with no means based social housing program, housing affordability is an especially consequential issue. Despite the literal translation of allmänyttan to ‘everyman’s good’, even this form of tenure is getting prohibitively expensive. While part of this can be explained by Sweden’s increasingly expensive housing construction costs (Trigg, 2014), the recent shift towards ‘business like’ behaviour of municipal housing corporations contributes to this pattern (Hedin et al., 2011). For example, new built municipal housing units can go for 141 or 162 crowns per square meter in the outer or inner city, respectively, well out of the budget for ‘every man’. Since the ‘system shift’ of the 1990s, Swedish renters have been disproportionately punished, witnessing 122 percent increases in rent between 1986 and 2005, while inflation was 49 percent (Bergenståhle, 2006). As of 2013, the average rent per square meter in a two room unit in the inner, western and southern districts of Stockholm was 110, 95 and 96 crowns, respectively (Stockholm Stad, 2013). And to contextualise these numbers rent for the later discussion, the average rent paid per night was 222, 177 and 180 crowns, respectively.

On a related note, collective and private ownership housing costs are dramatically increasing as well. Citing a 300% increase in housing prices from 2000 to 2013, economist Paul Krugman cautions policymakers of a housing bubble in the Stockholm market. On the other hand, the former Swedish Central Bank Deputy argues that no such bubble exists, pointing to rapid urbanisation and other factors as a driving the rapid increases (Russell, 2014). One of which is the development industry. Lacking competition and facing high production costs, the relatively small development industry tends to focus on more
profitable upscale housing, largely neglecting affordable housing (ibid.). While housing prices expectedly more expensive in the city centre, the southern suburbs have witnessing the highest price increases over the last five years (62, 61, and 60 percent in Skarpnäck, Vantörs and Skärholmen, respectively (Englund, 2014).

**Availability** - Opting to pursue a progressive affordable housing policy accessible to all, rather than just those on the fringes of society, the Swedish model became a model progressive policy makers around the world. However, the policy has had trouble ‘aging’. As other western countries slowed, or even dismantled their means tested social housing programs under neoliberal rule, Sweden slowed new construction, restricted affordability mandates and accommodated the privatization of allmännyttan units. An increasingly shrinking stock and long waiting periods for allmännyttan units coupled with an absence of means tested housing, newcomers, students and the poor are hardest hit. Because, after all, everyone appreciates affordable housing.

In the most recent municipal election, parties campaigned on building new housing, and lots of it. The previous governing party, Moderaterna, promised 140,000 units while the victorious Social Democrats campaigned on a billion crown housing bonus, focusing on studio and one-bedroom apartments for students (Trigg, 2014). The reasoning, of course, was to address the ongoing housing shortage in the region. The city’s unique housing tenure arrangement, coupled with one of Europe’s highest growth rates, privatisation of municipal housing and slow construction rate, has resulted in long waiting periods for housing. The housing shortage is felt disproportionately by residents seeking rental housing rather than collective or private ownership. For a rental flat in Stockholm city-wide weight times average six to eight years, and over twenty years for an apartment in the inner city (Bostadsförmedlingen, 2015). As of 2014, over 470 000 people were in the queue to obtain a first hand rental contract for a municipal rental apartment (Bostadsförmedlingen, 2015). To make matters worse, in the last 10 years, 35,000 rental units have been privatised and transferred to tenant ownership model (Löfberg, 2010). One common argument put forth by certain political parties and the development industry to address the situation is that a ‘moving chain’ will solve the housing shortage for all. A take on the trickle down effect, the moving chain theory argues that by building primarily
larger and expensive homes, consumers will ‘move up’, in turn freeing-up currently occupied, affordable units. This argument has been criticised by actors in the housing industry and researchers as unfounded, regressive and biased towards the development sector (Jagvillhabostad.ne, 2014, Skoog 2009).

**Segregation** - Closely related to the issue of housing availability in Stockholm are patterns of socio-economic segregation observed on both local and regional scales. Fueled both by national, European and overseas migration, Stockholm is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Europe, growing nearly 30 per cent from 1995 to 2010. Though accompanying this rapid urbanisation, recent studies have found the city has witnessed worrying rates of spatial segregation observed along multiple income and ethnicity measurements (Amcoff et al., 2014). Put simply, Stockholm’s poor and wealthy, foreign and native-born are going about their day with increasingly less and less face-to-face contact.

By economic measures, Stockholm’s inner-city neighbourhoods have witnessed strong increases in relative wealth accompanied by the decreases in relative poverty. As Hedin et al. point out, poverty in Stockholm, is a suburban phenomenon. For example, the proportion of the city’s richest tenth percentile living in the neighbourhoods of Södermalm and Norrmalm increased by five and seven percent, respectively, while the proportion of the poorest tenth percentile decreased marginally. A counter trend has been observed in the outer-city suburbs, with dramatic increases in the proportion of the city’s poorest tenth percentile (eight and six percent in Rinkeby-Kista and Skärholmen, respectively) accompanied by marginal decreases in the inner city neighbourhoods (ibid.). In other words, the rich are moving out of the suburbs and into the city, while the poor are doing the opposite.

Looking at the social patterns, Stockholm has witnessed a city wide increase in foreign born residents explained by the previously mentioned migration patterns. However, these new residents have tended to be segregated within the city’s outlying million program neighbourhoods, secluded from the offerings of the inner city. And while the inner-city neighbourhoods of Södermalm and Norrmalm each saw a two percent increase in the percentage of foreign-born residents, outlying areas of Rinkeyby-Kista and Skärholmen witnessed ten and 19 percent increases, respectively.
Though worrying trends can be observed along both social and economic measurements, the two are strongly correlated, further exasperating the situation. For Hedin et al. (2011) the process of spatial polarisation between the super-gentrified and low-income neighbourhoods is a direct outcome of the ‘system shift’ in housing carried out since the nineties. According to their research, the series of national housing policies following neoliberal market logic has made for more segregated communities in the country’s three big cities, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo. Relying on national data from 1986 to 2001, liberalisation of the housing market has punished renters disproportionately, accommodated spatial segregation and fueled gentrification in the country’s three biggest cities (ibid.).

4.8 Airbnb in Stockholm

With such a unique and politically charged housing regime, the city serves as an interesting case study. How does a platform with roots in both digital communitarianism and unregulated, free market liberalism, play out in a city that views housing as something between a human right and market good? As of yet, the topic of Airbnb in Stockholm has garnered little social, political or editorial attention. Despite the quick rise of over a thousand listings, increasing international tourism focus, and a politically charged housing shortage, Airbnb does not seem to be on the radar of the media, nor many of the relevant actors. Since launching in August of 2012, Airbnb has garnered just over a thousand listings in Stockholm, or about 5% of the total hotel rooms throughout the city (Stockholm Business Region, 2014). And when registering an account on Airbnb, the site is eager to inform that the average Airbnb host in Stockholm brings in 865 (presumably American) dollars a month.

Little attention has been devoted to the arrival of Airbnb in Stockholm in the last couple years. Existing policy geared towards private short-term rental platforms seems to be minimal. Currently, there are two main policies indirectly affecting what you can rent, and how much you can make from renting. As of 2013, the Swedish tax agency, Skatteverket
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(2015), declares each property to pay 30 percent tax only once annual earnings have exceeded 40,000 crowns. And in the media, while some articles focus on the potential environmental benefits of new digital platforms such as Airbnb (Moberg et al., April 28, 2015), others tend to focus on the sensational stories of hosts having their apartments vandalized by guests. In Stockholm, the idea of Airbnb as a form of sustainable consumption was capitalised on by the department store Åhléns, by offering a rental apartment that doubled as a showcase for their line of “environmentally friendly products” (Larsson, 2014). Other articles, particularly in travel and business sections of the paper, border on promotional material, boasting of its offerings and commercial success. The sole critical voice in the media seems to come from Nöjesguiden (Samuelsson, 2014), a lifestyle magazine that drew attention to the critiques frequently presented in cities such as New York, Barcelona and San Francisco. The article went on to bring up two major concerns: what Airbnb means in a city where housing is in short supply, and the encroaching commercialization of everyday life. In preparing for their article on Airbnb in Stockholm, Nöjesguiden, found the relevant actors in the housing to be oblivious to Airbnb’s presence, an observation that I observed in my research process as well.
5. Results

5.1 Empirical Results

Given Stockholm’s unique housing situation and the controversial discussion around Airbnb and similar platforms in other cities, it’s now worth understanding what is happening in Stockholm. Setting out on this piece of research, one of the early empirical questions asked was: How as the rise of private short-term rentals spatially materialised in Stockholm? As described in the methodologies section, this particular research question was addressed by spatially visualising the primary data gathered from Airbnb’s Stockholm listings. After scraping nearly one thousand useful data points from the Airbnb website, I was able to geocode and project the data to display the spatial patterns of private short-term rentals in Stockholm. Not surprisingly, a strong majority (78 percent) of the listings are observed within the inner city, with Södermalm and Norrmalm being the two most popular districts, respectively. These findings were mirrored when considering listings per capita, with Södermalm and Norrmalm each observing 30.6 and 25 listings per one thousand residents whereas Spånga-Tensta and Älvsjö both observed 1.8. Based off initial observations, there seems to be no spatial correlations when comparing listings types (i.e. entire apartment, spare room) to the city’s ten districts. When looking at the median listing price per night from district to district, the results tend to deviate slightly from expected. Overall, the median nightly rate ranged from 374 in Spånga-Tensta, to 978 crowns in Norrmalm. The most expensive districts were Norrmalm and Södermalm at 978 and 901 crowns per night, respectively. Surprisingly, the median price per night in Södermalm exceeded that of Östermalm (867 crowns/night). At 850 crowns, the outer city district of Hägersten-Liljeholmen witnessed a surprisingly high nightly rate. The data further showed twelve hosts to list three or more spaces. Beyond these empirical results, additional primary data gathered during research revealed a wealth of discussions tying into the previously established theoretical lens.
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Figure viii. Airbnb Median Nightly Listing Price by District in Stockholm, Sweden.

Figure ix. Airbnb Listing Popularity by District in Stockholm, Sweden
5.2 Interview Results

While the geographic data raises interesting trends and discussion points, the conversations with hosts and relevant actors from the tourism and housing industry bring out a much richer, more nuanced understanding of the private short-term rental landscape in Stockholm. In order to share my findings, I present the relevant themes and observations gathered through my interview process. I begin by presenting the discussions held with my sample of Airbnb hosts in Stockholm. In order to clearly convey our discussions, I have organised this section around the ‘fiveWs and one H’ (who, what, where, when, why and how). I then go on to share the discussions held with the two relevant industry actors, a representative of the housing advocacy group, Jagvillhabosad.nu, and the Stockholm Business Region.

*Who hosts?*

In conducting interviews, respondents tended to be relatively tech-savvy and educated, with a secure housing situation. Three of the participants, two of which are single mothers,
have young children under the age of eight. Participants ranged from a university student renting out her apartment while out of town, to new parents hosting guests on a daily basis to help pay the bills, to the host with experience running her own private short-term rental platform in the past. The eight interview participants ranged in age from their early twenties to early sixties, with all but one being female. This gender bias was unintended, and in the case of ‘cold-call’ interview propositions, men always declined to participate. Participants’ occupations included two university students, three self employed, and three professionals. All eight of the participants have obtained (or are in the process of obtaining) a post-secondary education. Although I do not have the resources to determine if my research sample is exactly representative of the Airbnb host population in Stockholm, I am content with the geographic and social range of participants given my limited budgeted time for this piece of research.

What do they think about hosting?
Most of the eight interview participants saw Airbnb in a favourable light. Though two used it merely as a source of income in a time of need, multiple respondents described the platform as some sort of international community that provided a flexible source of income. Above all, Airbnb represented, just that, a flexible and relatively easy source of income. And for many of the participants, Airbnb was a new, better alternative to traditional hotels.

Where do hosts host?
Five of the eight participants lived and hosted in the inner city, while the remaining three lived in outer suburbs south of the inner-city that predate the million programme. All respondents lived and rented within a multi dwelling building. Not surprisingly, all interview participants listed ‘location’ as the most important actor in determining the success of the listing. Though one participant made a point of questioning the understanding of how to define distance, “If somebody comes from Los Angeles, or Tokyo, or even a small village in the country, no matter where they come from, ‘city centre’ and ‘distance’ doesn’t mean the same thing” (Östermalm ii). All but one of the participants had full tenure security, with two living in a bostadsrätt, five in hyresrätt. The eighth
participant sublets a friend’s bostadsrätt through an informal second hand agreement including permission to rent out through Airbnb. See figure x for an understanding into the geographic spread of interview participants.

When do hosts host?
There was a fairly even split between rental approaches, with three renting out their entire apartment, three renting out a room in their apartment while they were present, and one participant offering both formats. It’s interesting to differentiate between the two driving factors behind renting out the entire apartment. For Kungsholmen and Södermalm, they would rent only when they had previously arranged to be out of town, while Östermalm i and Östermalm ii were willing and able to vacate their apartment and stay with a friend, family member or even in a hostel, while guests stayed in their apartment. Three of the participants host or have hosted on a near full time basis, with Högdalen i and her partner having hosted more than 200 guests in their time as Airbnb hosts. Another three host on a regular basis, renting out their apartment or spare bedroom once or twice a week. Others host only as a means to an end, for instance Centralen, hosts on weekends only, and just until her revenues cover half of her monthly rent, never exceeding that threshold.

Why do hosts host?
Mirroring the positive view put forth by proponents of short-term private rentals as discussed in the above introduction to Airbnb, every interview participant leaned towards two main benefits of hosting: the social connections and the added income. Respondents repeatedly cited the benefits of hosting people with different backgrounds as one of the leading reasons to host, especially when the host is present during the rental period. For Högdalen i, this has long been something she and her partner have appreciated. Before renting through Airbnb, they worked at hostels while travelling and hosted on the free accommodation service couchsurfing.org. The three participants that have children cited their exposure to new people and new languages (particularly English) as a welcomed side effect of hosting. When asked, none of the participants had managed to keep in touch with past guests. In all but two cases, the respondents had used Airbnb as a guest while travelling abroad, while a select few had used the free alternative service, couchsurfing.com,
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as well. Their familiarity and/or participation in the ‘sharing economy’ outside of Airbnb ranged from (centralen), who had never heard of the concept to Östermalm ii that has been a contributing member of other platforms, up to Midsommarkransen, who was using Airbnb as a source of income while writing a new web service that would facilitate sharing of free-used goods in Stockholm. For Högdalen i and her family, the sharing economy is “good for the environment and your budget”.

But while the social aspect was appreciated, the added income was the driving factor for hosting for all participants. In fact, for Högdalen i, the financial aspect offered by Airbnb was reason enough for abandoning Couchsurfing.org as an occasional host, and moving towards acting as a full time host with Airbnb. It’s “a way to get some money without working” commented Södermalm. Midsommarkransen shared this view, appreciating “the way that you can make money out of your home like that, without any effort”. For most of the participants, the money earned through hosting on Airbnb went towards paying for “bread and butter” (Östermalm ii), bills, rent, covering the costs of being a new homeowner, or into their savings account. But for Östermalm i, the money from hosting on Airbnb was “the kind of money you can spend without feeling guilty”. Similarly, Södermalm, who only rents while out of town, saw Airbnb as a source of income to help fund her travels and to “avoid paying double living costs”.

One of the characteristics of Airbnb most valued by hosts was the flexibility it provided. If they were not able to rent, they changed their rental calendar on the Airbnb website. In fact, Högdalen i and Högdalen ii no longer rent nearly as much as they did a year ago. For Högdalen i, this shift changed as their son grew older, and they needed the space. But they have not ruled the service out. In fact, as they are currently looking for a new apartment, they are seeking out a space slightly larger than they actually need, in order to have a designated Airbnb room. Meanwhile, Högdalen ii, pulled her Airbnb listing off the site once she had found a fulltime job and no longer needed the extra money, while still renting out the room to a Student, for as she puts it: “I don't feel good having a room that is empty… [so I] rent it to someone at a reasonable price that needs a room”.

Another reoccurring theme that emerged while conducting interviews was how Airbnb compared to more traditional hotels. First off, they were more often than not,
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mentioned as being more affordable and accommodating. But more interestingly, Airbnb rentals were repeatedly lauded for offering a more ‘authentic’ Stockholm stay. This authenticity was offered through various avenues. Respondents that lived outside the inner city addressed their location as an opportunity to explore the ‘everyday life’ of locals in the city’s authentic suburbs. “[Airbnb is] a way to explore Stockholm’s suburbs” mentioned Högdalen i, “There’s a lot of interesting things happening and I think [visitors] should take part in that”. Though conversely, as Högdalen ii points out “it’s not like you want to spend your whole day in Högdalen”. She later went on to make the case that “People are still going to stay in hotels, this is more for the interested people... that want to meet the real people of Sweden”. Östermalm i, who lists her apartment in the posh, central neighbourhood of Östermalm has a noteworthy understanding about authentic urbanism. For Östermalm i, it’s the gentrified island of Södermalm that offers the 'local experience', while her home neighbourhood lacks it. For Östermalm i, the authentic city is one with hip cafés, plentiful bars, lively locals and minimal hotels. Six of the participants offered their guests a custom guide to the city that looked beyond the standard tourist destinations, and suggested their own personal restaurants, sites and experiences. Turning to a smaller scale, participants made inferences to the ‘authentic body’ as part of the Airbnb experience. In some cases, it is the host’s presence that is sought out by the guest looking for the authentic destination. Sometimes this presence seems to be offered, while other times it is requested. For example, Midsommarkransen commented that “being there with my daughter, [the guests] get a view of our everyday life. I guess that’s kind of exotic” and Östermalm ii shared that Airbnb guests sometimes choose a particular listing because of the opportunity to stay with a local, “they think that the local is included in the price”. These two scales converge to offer the “authentic, high-quality accommodations” (Airbnb, 2015) the platform promotes and customers expect, though not necessary without indirectly governing the hosts.

Why hosts don’t like to host?
Six of the eight participants interviewed found that overall, the benefits of hosting through Airbnb outweigh the disadvantages. The remaining two saw hosting strangers as task that they were never fully comfortable with, and were using the platform strictly for the added income. The most commonly cited disadvantages to hosting were the ‘stranger’ factor and
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the amount of effort required to fulfill the unwritten expectations of guests. Each participant, no matter whether they rent while present or away, mentioned their unease in having a stranger stay in their apartment. This malaise was constructed through both negative past experiences and perceived potential experiences. One host had a prospective guest ask whether she offered “extra services” during the booking phase (to which she reported the user to customer service) and another, a single mother, had opted not to host single men. Other hosts provided separate anecdotes of guests that had left their apartment in a bad state, helped themselves to the host’s wine collection, or hosted parties for dozens of friends and family.

“Culture shocks” were sometimes mentioned as a disadvantage as well, in which hosts may be hesitant to rent to certain groups. During our interview, Östermalm ii confronted this issue and underlying conflict head on, even framing it as an advantage.

“I don’t know if it’s an advantage, or disadvantage, but it forces you to think about to what extent you’re a racist... I do tend to be a bit reluctant to rent to people that aren’t westerners, for primarily one reason, that is the house [neighbours], that a Chinese, Japanese, black person, whatever, is more noticed in the house. And also, possibly, behaving more differently, which is of course, not necessarily the case, but possible... [Hosting] Russians I would be a bit iffy, that is of course a prejudice. But it opens my eyes. Very often... I have to think about it, and think about my reactions. But then again when it has to do with your home, possibly you should judge your prejudice and your instinct, and be generous in other situations... Where are your limits? It’s not obvious. I think I’d put it as an advantage. It forces you to think about it”

Beyond these social factors, respondents regularly listed the added time and effort required to arrange bookings, prepare for and accommodate guests as the second most common disadvantage. One single mother, Midsommarkransen, notes that “It can get tiring to always be in your own home, always have to be presentable and social. But there’s ways around that. I can just be in my room... it takes effort as a host”. Meanwhile, for Östermalm ii, she sees a silver lining, saying that her time hosting only makes her more appreciative of her time alone. Listing her space as both a ‘spare bedroom’ within a shared apartment and ‘entire apartment’ Östermalm ii finds that the expectations differ between the two rental
types. While those that choose to stay in a spare bedroom tend to put up with more, the guests that book the entire apartment expect the unit to be “hotel clean”. Östermalm i also finds the added work to be more than she originally expected but continues to hosts, especially she argues, when she considers the money she makes from hosting. Of course the amount of effort required ranged from case to case, listing to listing, price bracket to price bracket.

*How do hosts host?*

Each participant had a unsure view on informing their neighbours and landlords of their behaviour. Some were eager suggest their neighbours to use Airbnb as a host in order to garner additional income. On the other hand, most of the participants felt that their actions were either not of concern to the neighbours, or they feared the potential responses. This latter concern was amplified when participants were asked if they had talked to their landlord or housing board about renting through Airbnb or similar service. As Södermalm commented when questioned whether or not they have sought permission from their landlord, "I wont ask, because I don’t think they have an answer to it, but will probably say no". Midsommarkransen was also hesitant about letting her landlords know, because as she said “I don’t know how the landlord feels about me making a business out of [my apartment].” One participant’s role as a vacation rental host has resulted in strained relations between her and her tenancy board, though she continues regardless.

As previously mentioned, *trust between strangers* is a key component to a successful ‘sharing economy’ platform, not the least being Airbnb (Botsman and Rogers, 2011). To build trust among hosts and guests, Airbnb relies on a five star personal review system, essentially a personal evaluation of both the host and guest. And though Airbnb users tend to rank their cohorts relatively favourably compared to other platforms (Zervas *et al.* 2015), the review system remains an influential, and sometimes stressful, feature of the platform. For participants, the most important factors in determining a successful listing are location, price, and not least, their reviews. Some participants strategically began hosting by listing their rentals at a low price to attract initial customers, and once they had built a solid foundation of favourable reviews from past guests, they would raise the price
per night of their room. Midsommarkransen explains: “[good reviews] make it easier for me to get guests, which makes it possible to raise the price”. With reviews linked so closely with potential earnings (the main reason why participants host), they tend to strongly influence the behaviour of both guest and host. A “stressful thing”, the review system ensures that Östermalm i keeps her apartment always clean and presentable. And as Östermalm ii notes, “it does influence the relationship a bit. You know you're going to review each other [later]”. Recounting an instance in which two guests drank some wine not intended for them and then proceeded to thank her for the generosity in their review, Östermalm ii found that the reviews can inadvertently establish expectations of future guests. But the influence of reviews extends missing beyond bottles of wine as one participant worried that her neighbours could use the reviews as evidence against her in court if they decided to make the case that she was illegally subletting her apartment.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, all interview participants were proponents of Airbnb and slightly defensive when asked about state interventions in the practice. Södermalm saw the sharing aspect of Airbnb as a benefit, making it exempt from regulation: “I do feel that if people use the apartment for more permanent purposes, like for a bed and breakfast business, I think it should be regulated. But I don’t see the harm in avoiding paying double lodging costs while you’re away. Why not share? It’s better”. As Östermalm i put it, “the only threat to [Airbnb’s future] is regulation”. Though upon deeper discussion, nearly all thought some form of intervention would be appropriate. Even the aforementioned Östermalm i came around, stating “my American side says no... but my Swedish side says yes. As a user I sure would not like them to do it. But I can see why they should”. Some pointed towards ‘carrot’ policy facilitating Airbnb and similar private short-term rental platforms, while others suggested ‘stick’ policy mechanisms slightly prohibitive of the platform.

For example, Högdalen i suggested a one stop website or information brochure published by the state to serve as a source for all measures hosts should take. Högdalen ii added that measures to ensure personal safety would be welcomed. On the other hand, exactly how restrictive policy measures would take form was unclear for the respondents, but as Östermalm i imagined, it to be through some added tax, because after all, “Sweden loves taxes”. Though not exactly sure how regulation would look, Kungsholmen turned to
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the second hand rental market in Stockholm as an example. “The market gets greedy” he said” so some time of regulation is good”. Östermalm i inadvertently backed up Kungsholmen’s statement in saying “so [with Airbnb] you get kinda greedy in a lot of ways. I won’t do it as much [once I get a full time job], but will still use it when I go away”. And for Östermalm ii policy directing the future of private short-term rentals goes far beyond specific targeted actions.

I do think we should take away rent control… It is absurd that I don’t have the right to charge you what the market will bear, but you can use my building to put my apartment on the market and you get all the money for it. of course that’s crazy. So it would be best if we took away, or strongly changed rent control, although it has of course, disadvantages, for example segregation…[which] has already happened, so take away rent control.

Despite the range of potential policy actions, a few participants questioned the feasibility of regulating and enforcing such a platform. “I don’t think it’s possible to stop these kinds of things” said Midsommarkransen.

With varying familiarity, all participants were aware of the current taxation regulations around renting a vacation unit, though the details seemed to change from case to case. One participant saw being an early adopter of private short-term rental as “a golden opportunity… [because] usually tax and regulations are quite late figuring things out and making regulations and stuff. I think in the couple of years I’ve been above the limit and I haven’t declared it”. Others, that use the platform on a full time basis, seemed to have a better understanding and following of the taxation laws.

For the most part, interview participants tended to base their pricing scheme off of how the existing market was behaving. The early adopters said they were forced to lower their prices in order to compete with a growing supply over the past two years. Other more recent adopters gauged their surrounding listings, offering a slightly lower rate to gain a competitive edge. And of course prices would fluctuate from season to season, with February being the slow month across the board. But for all but one host, setting the per night price was far from science. For Södermalm, she would determine the rate based off
her “rent plus a little”. And for Högden i and her family, the potential future revenue gained through Airbnb is something they will keep in mind as they look to move to a bigger apartment in the future.

Shifting scales, participants were asked what they saw private short-term rentals bringing to their neighbourhood and Stockholm more broadly. One common answer was the ‘tourist dollars’ their guests brought to previously neglected neighbourhoods that lack larger hotel accommodations. For Midsommarkransen, her role as a host brought a sort of power. Recommending places “gives the host a power... it’s not only hosting, there’s other business stuff too. It sounds so disgusting! But I can just not send these people to this hamburger place.” (Midsommarkransen). Otherwise, participants were either unsure of what private short-term renting could bring to a neighbourhood or felt that it brought “nothing to the surrounding neighbourhood. The number of people nights in any small neighbourhood is so small” (Östermalm ii).

The relationship between Airbnb and the city’s current housing shortage was a talking point that drew out deeper consideration. Kungsholmen was cautious of how an increasingly popular Airbnb could impact housing availability: “that’s one problem I can see about it. If there is too much money in this to make, then it will be even more difficult to get an apartment in this city”. And contrary to many of her other remarks, Södermalm felt “the apartment should be for people actually living there... Not for personal gain”. Högden i on the other hand, felt that the housing shortage provided a reason for accommodating Airbnb: “In Stockholm it’s so difficult finding an apartment anyway... I think [the government] should cooperate”. And with her background as an entrepreneur formally running a small network of private short-term rentals prior to Airbnb’s arrival, Östermalm ii, questioned and reversed the argument that this style of rentals can negatively impact housing availability: “So is Airbnb taking any housing away from the market? No, I don’t think so. They’re probably stopping more hotels from being built, so that on that land, they can build houses for Stockholmers! Isn’t that brilliant!".
5.3 Interviews with officials

Finding relevant officials that were willing and able to discuss the rise of private short-term rentals in Stockholm proved to be a challenge. Of the relevant actors working in sectors related to tourism and housing, only two were following Airbnb’s rise. In reaching out to the actors outlined in my relevant actor list (See Appendix), I was faced with lack of awareness on the topic and limited availability. Representatives from two organisations I identified as relevant to the Airbnb question, showed little interest or understanding in the topic. For example, when contacted, a representative from Hyresgästföreningen brushed off the interview request, suggesting that Airbnb only applied to those travelling abroad. I explained further how the platform operates and the situation in Stockholm, but to no avail. And in a personal correspondence with a staff member at the City of Stockholm, I was told Airbnb was often discussed by staff at City Hall, though only when planning their vacations in New York City. A later official statement from the city planning office informed me that the planning office has a mandate not interfere with the market, and therefore refrains from intervening. The national housing board, Boverket, was apathetic to discussing the topic with me, despite multiple correspondence. Nevertheless, the discussions with the two actors engaged in the topic raised interesting conversations and considerations. The two representatives I spoke with were Olof of the Stockholm Business Region, a municipal arms length corporation tasked with promoting the region for investment and tourism, and Tina, a housing activist and representative from Jagvillhabostad.nu (roughly translating to iwantahome.now), a formal organisation that lobbies for affordable and accessible housing for young Stockholmers.

Given the situation in which Jagvillhabostad emerged from, an acute housing shortage disproportionately affecting young people, Tina expressed skepticism and concern over any new platforms or changes that could decrease the already slim housing offerings. Although she acknowledges it is a blameless situation, she expressed concern around people choosing to list rooms or apartments that would otherwise be suitable for more permanent tenants. She went on to use this scenario in order to challenge the previously discussed ‘moving chain’ argument.
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One of the problems with Airbnb is that people who could live in a smaller apartment choose to stay in their big apartment and sublet one room on Airbnb in order to afford it, and of course could instead sublet it to someone on a long term stay, or move into a smaller apartment and let other people get into that apartment

This scenario, though, only applies to a portion of Airbnb listings. Of the hosts I interviewed, four hosted in a room that could be suitable for a full time resident. As previously mentioned, another common practice is for members to only host while they are out of town, and not using their apartments. And for Tina, although this doesn’t use up a potential full time housing opportunity, it is still problematic.

“On a theoretical level... it builds on to the idea of the home as a commodity, rather than a human right. Which is something Jagvillhabostad really tries to push for, housing as a human right and not a commodity. And then it really, super clearly, becomes a commodity, something that you just experience as part of your travel consumption...And to see your home as potential profit has become... a more important view on your housing, especially in Stockholm”

Seeing housing as a commodity in which profit can be gained partly explains the argument commonly put forth by proponents of Airbnb that the platform makes city living more affordable. But Tina saw this solution to be misguided, for as she put it “the problem is that the rents are too high to begin with, and that’s not something that is changed by Airbnb”. To address this issue, she and her colleagues at Jagvillhabostad.nu push for expanding the affordable housing supply in Stockholm. And finally, Tina (though not necessarily Jagvillhabostad) critiques the inherent benefit class privileges associated with central, attractive and not the least, stable housing provides certain hosts on Airbnb and similar platforms.

Coming from a slightly different perspective and position, though still curious towards the rise of Airbnb in Stockholm, Olof Zetterberg, the CEO of the Stockholm Business Region, provided valuable insights into how Private short-term rentals fit into the region’s growth
goals. Although listing his own home for rent on Airbnb was out of the question, Olof has used the platforms on multiple trips. Speaking on behalf of the Stockholm Business Region, Airbnb was welcomed as serving a demographic that was previously deterred by high hotel rates. Furthermore, he saw value in the geographic spread Airbnb and similar platforms can offer: “Hotels tend to crowd around the railway station, which is not a typical place to live... So therefore it opens up a lot of possibilities for people to feel the way ordinary people live here in Stockholm... [as a traveller] you want to stay where people really live, go to local bars and restaurants”.

While the Stockholm Business Region was aware potential negative and controversial impacts of Airbnb (as learned from their counterparts in Amsterdam), they had yet to hear of any issues and Stockholm, neither from the media nor from the hospitality industry. He went on to theorise that Stockholm may be immune to the Airbnb controversies witnessed in other cities due to existing taxation and housing policy. For one, the lack of any earmarked travel and hospitality taxes in the Swedish tax system could possibly restrict public relations battles funded by hospitality lobbyists. Secondly, the legacy of Sweden’s social housing programs has made it difficult, if not illegal, to buy or lease multiple units, a crucial aspect in the problematic rise of ‘power listers’ as witnessed and previously described in New York City.

Reflecting on the Stockholm Business Region’s goal to make Stockholm a leading sustainable growth region, Olof identified both complementary (takes advantage of idling capacity) and conflicting (induced demand for air travel) patterns. And when asked about the ‘sharing economy’ he was quick to suggest that the term was “just a buzzword”, seeing many of the highly cited examples as “a marketplace for private people that are doing business with each other”. “If I am staying with Airbnb” he added, “I am not sharing anything!”. 
6. Discussion

The empirical results presented above provide insight into the spatial patterns of private short-term rentals in Stockholm. Yet there is still much to be said about the phenomenon and what it means to a city faced with such a unique housing situation. With my theoretical framework rooted in critical urban theory serving as a ‘lens’ through which I view my results, I now address the latter two of my research questions presented in the introduction: *How can the rise of private short-term rental platforms be understood through a critical urban theory lens, and what are the trends, and how can policy makers best address them?* The former question is addressed by revisiting the critical readings of neoliberal urbanism, commodification, gentrification and tourism as they connect to the discussions held with interview participants. After drawing out these connections, I retain my critical lens in suggesting progressive policy actions.

6.1 A Critical Reading of Private Short-term Rentals

As Michel Bauwens outlines, defining the collaborative consumption calls for a broad understanding, accommodating for-profit-centralised and decentralised-local models geared towards community benefit. This definition allows for both technoliberal and communitarian language to flourish under the same umbrella term. Through some methods, I believe the ‘sharing economy’ has the power to present a powerful critique of neoliberalism, but subletting your apartment through platforms such as Airbnb is not one of them. On both state and individual scales, private short-term rentals, a particularly urban phenomenon, illustrate the role cities, including Stockholm, play as laboratories of neoliberalism. Wendy Larner’s (2000) interpretation of neoliberalism as transcending ideology, policy and governmentality help understand the role private short-term rentals play in the neoliberal city. Though not directly touching upon neoliberal ideology, the primary and secondary data gathered through the course of my research illustrate neoliberal discourse in policy and governmentality.

Municipal governments and politicians responding to the rise of private short-term rentals often cite ‘catching up with the 21st Century’ as a policy driver. And though this response is often in reference to technological advancements, it’s a fitting description of the
continued entrenchment of the neoliberal hegemony through dismantling of Keynesian and Stockholm School welfarism. London’s recent debate over Deregulation Bill 33 centered around deregulating land use laws established in the 70s as well as citing the competitive edge deregulation would play in attracting and accommodating international tourists to urban spectacles such as Wimbledon. Stockholm’s City Planning Department’s mandate to avoid interfering with the market is a prime example of neoliberal policy seeking “unfettered operation of markets” (Larner, 2000. p. 6). The former short-term rental platform owner and frequent Airbnb host, Östermalm ii’s call for removing the “socialistic” rent control policies established under the Social Democrats connects the private short-term renting market’s behaviour to quite obvious neoliberal policy directives. Acting as an arms-length municipal corporation tasked with attracting investment and tourism, The Stockholm Business Region’s favourable view of Airbnb and similar platforms is indicative of neoliberal policy. This is compounded by their position as the only governmental body actively following the topic. While the deregulation or absence of state policies surrounding the rise of Airbnb illustrate how neoliberal policy has played out around the topic, we can further understand how the city acts as a laboratory of neoliberalism by looking towards the individual.

Neoliberal rule permeates through to the individual scale through Foucault’s post-structuralist concept of governmentality. As governments shifted from managerial to entrepreneurial roles, individuals began to see themselves less as citizens, and more enterprising taxpayers, responsible for enhancing their own well being. Conversations with Airbnb hosts provides an insight into how neoliberal forms of governance encourage these individuals to conform to norms of the market. Our conversations found the draw to bring the market into the home to introduces a complex set of rituals inviting/demanding conformance to market rule. Closely linked to the potential earnings a host can make, the review system built into the Airbnb platform weaves market rule into domesticity in a new way. And though the social connections built through hosting on Airbnb was a commonly listed benefit, these social interactions, from the first to the last meeting, influence the future hosting income of users. Intimidated by the possibility of a low or even moderate rating, hosts conduct themselves and their households under market rule. The pressure to maintain a high rating had hosts preparing their apartment and bringing it up to “hotel
clean” in some cases. This level of preparation was initially unexpected by some hosts, though they quickly conformed to expectations after one review brought it up. Although described as a device to ensure trust among strangers, the review system is just as effective at introducing otherwise informal domestic labour into hosts’ lives.

Theodore, Peck and Brenner (2013) describe actually existing neoliberalism as the resulting landscape when the ideological utopian view of free market rule is faced with pre-existing, path-dependent political institutions. Actually existing neoliberalism in Stockholm can be seen as the gentrification of the inner city coupled with low income filtering since the 1990s ’system shift’ in housing. Additionally, the relatively few number of hosts with multiple listings in Stockholm, can further serve as an example of actually existing neoliberalism in Stockholm as aspirational hosts are met with welfare era housing policies. Reflecting the spatial unevenness of neoliberalism, the listings on Airbnb tend appear the inner city and Southern Stockholm, both of witnessed moderately strong gentrification over the last 20 years.

Beyond a spatial reflection of gentrification, I argue that the rise of private short-term rentals in Stockholm over the past couple years is tightly aligned with the factors theorized to drive gentrification. Discussions with Airbnb hosts in Stockholm have shown the platform to essentially democratise the rent gap theory. Where previously gentrification was fueled by investors, banks and homeowners capitalizing off of the rent gap, anyone with a rental contract now has the opportunity to appreciate the rent gap between actual and highest use. In this case, the highest use is a use that already carries a significantly high value, tourist accommodations. Not only can renters now profit off the rent gap, but those who own or are mortgaging their unit now have a new opportunity in which they can profit, beyond the standard sale of the unit. The one participant who determines her nightly rate as ‘rent plus a little’ serves as a prime example of hosts realising the profit in the rent gap. And though she was the only respondent who calculated the nightly rent in this way, the median listing price consistently exceeded median rental prices in all districts. To connect back to previously presented data, the average markup on listings in the inner city, western districts and southern districts is299, 170 and 232 percent, respectively. In this new found position, many of the participants
were uneasy around the idea of profiting off their landlord, perhaps in a reflection on the Swedish welfare era idea of housing as a right. The significant achievable profit realised in this playing of the rent gap theory, is explained by the ‘highest use’ value associated with tourism, but more specifically, the tourist. For as I raised in the theoretical framework, the tourist is in a position to live beyond their means for a brief period of time.

What private short-term rentals can offer that traditional hotels struggle with, is a sense of authenticity. Authenticity, as discussed in my theoretical framework, is a concept that both local drivers of gentrification as well as tourists seek out. As Urry points out, the tourist’s longing for authenticity predates the gentrifiers’. In fact, it predates the academic discussion of gentrification. Exhausted with the barrage of images of foreign landscapes presented by the media, new urban tourists continue to seek out more and more authentic spaces, or better yet, authentic places. Seizing the opportunity to profit off this demand for the authentic travel experience, millions of hosts have opened their doors to guests through Airbnb. According to the critiques of Airbnb presented in the case study, these hosts profit while the overall effect of the tourist gaze is destructive, reducing cultures to commodities.

The Airbnb tagline assures customers that they now can “belong anywhere”, as if in direct answer to the alienating effects of modernity. And while private short-term rentals offer an authentic place, many listings also allow for tourists to share their accommodation with the host. The authentic body presented in this exchange appeases the tourist gaze, but given the governing effects of hosting, could it be mere staged authenticity? Feeding the tourist gaze by offering the (in)authentic person in the authentic environment, private short-term rentals have been extremely successful in connecting the new urban tourist to the authentic local by easily and safely facilitating the commodification of the home.

Since the home emerged as a place of privacy, comfort and domesticity in the 17th Century, technological and social have had relatively little effect in transforming how we use this space. The modern home, more often than not, still reflects the values and uses established hundreds of years ago. And for the most part, the home has remained a place for privacy, separated from paid labour. But the rise of private short-term rentals facilitated through
platforms such as Airbnb present a situation in which the home can be relinquished from its role of a private sphere.

The rise of private short-term rental platforms has thrust the newly listed spaces into a state of liminality. By opening up the home to paying tourists, homes are caught within a transnational ‘inbetweeness’ straddling the public and the private, the market and the place and the vernacular and the economy. Where the home was once tightly defined by social limits, it now opens up to market culture. In listing their apartments online, hosts transform their homes from the private dwelling into an occasional hotel. However, their apartments are still a far cry from functioning as a full service market good that hotels fulfill. The inbetweenness of this process is emphasised through Airbnb’s flexibility to drift between private dwelling and tourist accommodations as the host pleases. The liminality of the space, however, is not limited to the time in which the guest is present, but extends to as long as the dwelling is listed for online bookings.

In pursuing this shifting role from the private to the public, private short-term rentals clearly illustrate a new form of the commodification of the home. The literature discussed in establishing my theoretical framework illustrates the commodification of space in the common form of the privatisation of public space. But here we are presented with a case in which the private becomes a good accessible to a public market. This transformation can be explained through the commodification theory. The home as a commodity is not necessary a new phenomenon In many western countries, private space has been traded as a market good since the industrial revolution. And as mentioned earlier, has undergone a shift towards a market good in Sweden over the last 30 years. However, what the rise of private short-term rentals does accomplish, is a new ‘everyday’ commodification of the home operating on a much smaller temporal scale than before. Interview participants came to view their homes as more immediate assets. Their home now represents “a way to get some money without working” (Södermalm), by pursuing the dormant exchange value to the detriment of the everyday use value of the home. With this new role as a market good, the ways in which the unit performs transforms. The ‘home’ becomes a ‘listing’, the ‘resident’ a ‘host’.

The rise of private short-term rentals also reflects the transformation of western cities from places of production to places of consumption. Relatively new to this role, cities
become backdrops for consumption as well as consumable spaces. The dramatic rise in popularity of Airbnb since its inception in 2008 demonstrates the incessant desire to consume urban space, especially ‘authentic’ urban space. Interview participants reinforce this notion by seeing apartments across the inner- and outer-city both as places for tourists to discover the ‘real’ Stockholm. While private short-term rentals represent excellent urban commodities, they also serve as an area to consume the city itself. Airbnb’s recent sponsorship title as the official alternative as ‘the official alternative accommodations’ sponsor for the 2016 Olympics, ties the platform to the ultimate urban spectacle. As global urban spectacles move from city to city, platforms such as Airbnb offer a flexible, yet precarious stock of accommodations. But the consumption of the city occurs on a smaller scale, as the site provides tailored guides to the most popular neighbourhoods in 21 cities. In some cases, Airbnb demonstrates the new precarity labour patterns these landscapes of consumption bring. Although interview participants herald the flexibility brought by hosting via Airbnb, the work is highly precarious, relying on global travel patterns, a competitive hosting market, and zero vocational benefits.

The rise of short-term rental platforms in Stockholm serves as an incredibly interesting case of the commodification of the home. As discussed in the case study, the Swedish housing stock has undergone a ‘system shift’ since the early 1990s, in which a large portion of the total housing stock rapidly shifted from housing as a right, to housing as a market good. Now embedded within this ongoing process of welfare dismantlement and commodification of the previously public housing stock, is a smaller, more dynamic case. Driving gentrification and furthering the uneven landscapes characteristic of neoliberal urbanism, this second overlapping phenomenon of commodification deserves attention from policy makers concerned for spatial and social justice.

6.2 Policy Guidance

Private short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb foster a blameless, yet conflicting relationship between user and city. On the one hand, Airbnb lives up to the claim to “make cities more affordable” (Airbnb, 2014b), by providing access to flexible, relatively easy income. But on the other hand, it is the same neoliberal mindset, one that seeks the
exchange value at the detriment to the use value of our cityscapes, responsible for making so many cities unaffordable in the first place (while at the same time driving countless postindustrial cities into economic despair). Furthermore, the clustering of Airbnb listings around the districts witnessing the highest levels of gentrification over the past 15 years raises the question: *Who is Airbnb making the city more affordable for?* By democratising the rent gap theory, Airbnb fuels the wheels of gentrification and holds the potential to price hosts (or their socio-economic cohorts) out of the neighbourhood, or in Stockholm’s case, occupy valuable rental space beyond its use value. But as other policy makers and even interview participants suggest, putting an all out stop on these sorts of can be extremely difficult. In addressing these issues, I take direction from Susan Fainstein’s confidence in incremental improvements through progressive within the current global capitalist hegemony. With this in mind, I present four suggestions influenced by my case study for policy makers at varying levels of government and other applicable organizations in Stockholm.

**Review the taxing scheme for private short-term rental** - Keep in mind the point raised by Johan and Zon as cited earlier: “make sure that the sharing economy is not a clever means for people or businesses to reduce their tax liability, thereby placing a higher burden on the general public” (2015. p. 11). The current tax scheme applied to private short-term rental should be updated to better reflect the changing nature of private short-term rentals. Interview participants were rarely 100 percent clear around taxing regulations, with each participant sharing a different reading of the law. Additionally, some participants used the current regulatory ambivalence around the issue to avoid paying taxes. Simplify the taxing scheme by aligning it with current hospitality VAT, 12 percent rather than the current 30% tax after exceeding annual earnings of 40,000 crowns. Follow cities such as Portland and San Francisco by working with Airbnb to collect and remit taxes rather than rely on hosts to file taxes. Renting an apartment in the city has different impacts than renting a summer home in Dalarna, tax accordingly.

**Consider temporal restrictions** - At the current taxation level, it takes a median earning hosts 46 days before they must declare their rental earnings. To accompany a shift towards
the standard hospitality 12% VAT as recommended above, consider limiting the number of days per year a listing is allowed. This will help ensure that an otherwise suitable apartment is not tied up by this highly profitable use, potentially making room for a resident in need. Followed in cities such as London and Amsterdam, this temporal restriction must be accompanied by ongoing enforcement. One suggestion is to limit the number of days a resident can host to 45 days, roughly reflecting the average number of holiday days for the Swedish worker. While this measure may restrict hosts such as Midsommarkransen, who rely on Airbnb as a primary income, the greater, long term effects should be more equitable.

**Align short-term rental laws with subletting laws** - A legacy of the Swedish Welfare Era, rent control aims to make a more equitable and just city. By restricting subletting profit to four percent, the recent introduction of ‘market like’ subletting laws, still somewhat holds this intention. Controlling the potential profit realised through short-term subletting may be a controversial recommendation, but it holds the potential to curb the negative aspects associated with gentrification. This action could potentially push residents towards opening their space to a subletter rather than temporary guest.

**Communicate clearly** - When registering as a host on Airbnb, the site suggests users to consult their local laws before proceeding, exonerating the platform of any legal responsibility. If the number of private short-term rental listings is to follow trend, thousands more will list their apartment in the coming year. Help new users follow the rules around short-term subletting by establishing a communication point (website, brochure etc.) where hosts are informed of everything they need to know. Suggested examples include fire and safety, tax and insurance regulations. An additional opportunity would be to have a welcome to Stockholm readymade brochures that covers emergency contacts (112 rather than 911!), waste disposal regulations, transit networks etc. But communication must be fostered on both sides. Bostadsrätt and Hyresrätt committees should oblige members to share their booking patterns with the committee in order to assure safety
7. Conclusion

Throughout the course of this research, I have sought to address four guiding research questions: *How has the rise of private short-term rentals spatially materialised in Stockholm?, how have other cities responded to the issue?, How can the rise of private short-term rental platforms be understood through a critical urban theory lens, and what are the trends, and how can policy makers best address them?* To do so, I turned to a diverse range of qualitative and quantitative data, examining existing literature as well as primary data garnered through data ‘scraping’ and semi-structured interviews. The empirical findings were then presented, setting the stage for further analysis of interview results through a poststructuralist critical lens. And finally, I presented four recommendations to act as a starting point for further public discussion surrounding rise of private short-term rentals in Stockholm, Sweden.

Examining the rise of private short-term rentals in Stockholm through a critical poststructuralist lens has led me to the conclusion that the phenomenon is characteristic of neoliberal policy and governmentality. Unregulated, Airbnb and similar platforms exasperate patterns of a spatially unjust city. However, a complete restriction on these platforms would likely prove ineffectual. The policy recommendations presented aim to address the major issues facing the Stockholm housing market: affordability, availability and segregation. And while these policies suggestions are influenced by the context, existing policies and my theoretical lens, it goes without saying that any official policies deserve much more in depth research, community engagement and public debate. As the popularity of private short-term rentals continue to rise, I urge policy makers, applicable actors and citizens to discuss, listen and act accordingly.
8. Bibliography


James Thoem


Högdalen i. (March 20, 2015). Interview.

Högdalen ii. (April 1, 2015). Interview.


James Thoem


Kungsholmen. (March 17, 2015) Interview.


James Thoem


Midsommarkransen. (April 1, 2015). Interview.


James Thoem


James Thoem


Södermalm. (March 17, 2015). Interview.


James Thoem


Östermalm i. (April 20, 2015). Interview.

### 9.1 Preliminary actor mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Why</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linje 17</td>
<td>A citizen group focused around self organising and resistance in southern Stockholm</td>
<td>Not sure if they are relevant. Focus seems to be on gentrification</td>
<td>Via website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyregästföreningen</td>
<td>Swedish tenant union that aims to make rental prices fair quality high. Represents tenants</td>
<td>Could provide insight into housing rights and responsibilities. For or against Airbnb?</td>
<td>Contact via website. But an alternative contact would be better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jagvillhabostad.nu</td>
<td>An organisation of you ppl seeking and lobbying for more housing</td>
<td>Could be critical of Airbnb? I wonder how they could contribute? Maybe what they see the right response being?</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@jagvillhabostad.nu">info@jagvillhabostad.nu</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konsumentverket</td>
<td>Swedish consumer rights agency</td>
<td>Have a code of conduct for holiday rentals, but how do these apply to the sharing economy? / Airbnb</td>
<td>Peter Vikström. Analyschef Konsumentverket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts</td>
<td>Airbnb hosts in Stockholm</td>
<td>To get an understanding of why hosts host. Their perceptions, experiences,</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 known hosts so far. More to come through recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians? Mehmet Kaplan</td>
<td>Housing, urban development and IT minister</td>
<td>Interesting to be both housing and IT minister. Airbnb applies to both files.</td>
<td>Press secretary: 072 239 7122</td>
<td>Maybe difficult to get time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boverket</td>
<td>National housing board. Specifically, enheten för boende och stadsutveckling</td>
<td>Have been commissioned by current minister of housing to look into short-term subletting.</td>
<td>Contact: Victoria Magnesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airbnb</td>
<td>Even Heggernes, Airbnb Scandinavia</td>
<td>To get an understanding of Airbnb operations in Scandinavia. To gauge their openness to policy cooperation</td>
<td>Via LinkedIn?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm Handelskammare</td>
<td>Stockholm Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Concerned with improving the housing situation in Stockholm for economic development reasons. Wrote a reform agenda. Wonder where they stand on Airbnb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.2 Standard interview request letter

Dear [host]

My name is James Thoem, and am currently working on my Masters in Sustainable Urban and Regional Planning with Karin Bradley at KTH. My proposed thesis work aims to evaluate current governmental policy reactions to Airbnb (and similar services) and suggest ways in which Stockholm policy should be formed. Part of my research will involve interviewing both relevant actors in the housing sector as well as Airbnb hosts. This is why I’m reaching out to you. I would like to invite you to participate in my research as an interview subject.

For the final report I aim to combine interview results with the geographic data of all Airbnb listings in Stockholm to produce final policy recommendations. If possible, I would prefer to conduct the interview in person at a location convenient to you. The interview should take approximately twenty minutes, with possibilities to schedule around your availability. Interview questions will revolve mainly around your experience as an Airbnb host and the perceived benefits and disadvantages of hosting.

Interviews will be carried out throughout April 2015. If you are willing to participate in my work, your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and if at any time you wish to have your input withdrawn from the study I can do so. Following the completion of my thesis I would be happy to share my results with you. If you could kindly reply with your availability over the coming weeks that would be much appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request, and if you have any questions please feel free to contact my via email, or by phone.

Best regards,

James Thoem
Sustainable Urban and Regional Planning
KTH
072 032 63 56
9.3 Guiding Interview Questions

1. How did you first hear of Airbnb?
2. Can you describe how Airbnb operates?
3. Have you used Airbnb as a guest?
4. How many times have you hosted?
5. Do you currently live in that apartment?
6. Do you own or rent?
7. How do you prepare for a visiting guest?
8. What attracted you to using Airbnb?
9. Are you usually present or absent when renting out your home?
10. Do you know anyone else that hosts?
12. If someone you knew was looking for a rental in Stockholm, what areas would you suggest they look into? Why this/these areas?
13. What do you think is the most important factor in renting an apartment on Airbnb in Stockholm? (i.e. photos, location, communication, reviews)?
14. What do you think might make one neighbourhood more popular/successful than another for Airbnb?
15. What are the rules surrounding taxing and renting your apartment?
16. Do you let your neighbours know before guests arrive?
17. What role do you think the government has in regulating Airbnb?
18. How do you think it’s regulated now?
19. Are there changes in current regulations (or lack thereof) you think are appropriate?
20. Are there ways you think policies could make your experience easier? safer? more difficult?
21. Where is your apartment?
22. How do you foresee the future of Airbnb developing? (Popularity, competition, regulation)
23. How do you think Airbnb can affect neighbourhoods?
24. Do you think this is something you can see yourself using for a long time?
25. How do you establish the pricing scheme when you rent?
26. Generally speaking, how do you use the extra income?
27. Do you participate in any other similar activities in the “sharing economy” (i.e. cashshare, City bikes, carpooling, Uber, task share, garden share etc.)? Why? What appeals to you?
28. Do you have any questions about my work?
29. Is there anything you would like to say that I haven’t asked you about?
30. (You mentioned that you know others who host. Would you feel comfortable asking them to contact me for an interview?)